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THE John Adams

WORKS

Of the MOST REVEREND

Dr. *JOHN TILLOTSON,*

Late Lord Archbiſhop of *Canterbury.*

IN TEN VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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SER-

SERMON XLII.

Againſt evil-ſpeaking.

Preached before the King and Queen, at Whitehall, Feb. 25. 1693-4.

TIT. iii. 2.

To ſpeak evil of no man.

GENERAL perſuaſives to repentance and a good life, and invectives againſt ſin and wickedneſs at large, are certainly of good uſe to recommend religion and virtue, and to expoſe the deformity and danger of a vicious courſe. But it muſt be acknowledged, on the other hand, that theſe general diſcourſes do not ſo immediately tend to reform the lives of men; becauſe they fall among the crowd, but do not touch the conſciences of particular perſons in ſo ſenſible and awakening a manner, as when we treat of particular duties and ſins, and endeavour to put men upon the practice of the one, and to reclaim them from the other, by proper arguments taken from the word of God, and from the nature of particular virtues and vices.

The general way is, as if a phyſician, inſtead of applying particular remedies to the diſtemper of his patient, ſhould entertain him with a long diſcourſe of diſeaſes in general, and of the pleaſure and advantages of health; and earneſtly perſuade him to be well, without taking his particular diſeaſe into conſideration, and preſcribing remedies for it.

But if we would effectually reform men, we muſt take to taſk the great and common diſorders of their lives, and repreſent their faults to them in ſuch a manner, as may convince them of the evil and danger of them, and put them upon the endeavour of a cure.

And to this end I have pitched upon one of the common and reigning vices of the age, calumny and evil-ſpeaking; by which men contract ſo much guilt to themſelves, and create ſo much trouble to others; and from

which, it is to be feared, few or none are wholly free: for *who is he* (saith the son of Sirach, Ecclus xix. 16.) *that hath not offended with his tongue? In many things* (saith St. James, chap. iii. 2.) *we offend all: and if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man.*

But how few have attained to this perfection? And yet unless we do endeavour after it, and in some good measure attain it, all our pretence to religion is vain. So the same apostle tells us, chap. i. 26. *If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.*

For the more distinct handling of this argument, I shall reduce my discourse to these five heads.

1. I shall consider the nature of this vice, and wherein it consists.

2. I shall consider the due extent of this prohibition, *To speak evil of no man.*

3. I shall shew the evil of this practice, both in the causes and effects of it.

4. I shall add some further considerations to dissuade men from it.

5. I shall give some rules and directions for the prevention and cure of it.

I. I shall consider what this sin or vice of *evil-speaking* here forbidden by the apostle is: μηδένα βλασφημεῖν, not to defame and slander any man, not to *hurt his reputation*, as the etymology of the word doth import. So that this vice consists in saying things of others which tend to their disparagement and reproach, to the taking away or lessening of their reputation and good name: and this, whether the things said be true or not. If they be false, and we know it, then it is downright calumny; and if we do not know it, but take it upon the report of others, it is however a slander; and so much the more injurious, because really groundless and undeserved.

If the thing be true, and we know it to be so, yet it is a defamation, and tends to the prejudice of our neighbour's reputation: and it is a fault to say the evil of others which is true, unless there be some good reason for it besides; because it is contrary to that charity and goodness which christianity requires, to divulge the faults of others,

others, though they be really guilty of them, without neceſſity, or ſome other very good reaſon for it.

Again, It is *evil-ſpeaking*, and the vice condemned in the text, whether we be the firſt authors of an ill report, or relate it from others; becauſe the man that is evil ſpoken of is equally defamed either way.

Again, Whether we ſpeak evil of a man to his face, or behind his back. The former way indeed ſeems to be the more generous, but yet is a great fault, and that which we call *reviling*; the latter is more mean and baſe, and that which we properly call *ſlander* or *backbiting*.

And, laſtly, Whether it be done directly and in expreſs terms, or more obſcurely, and by way of oblique inſinuation; whether by way of downright reproach, or with ſome crafty preface of commendation; for ſo it have the effect to defame, the manner of addreſs does not much alter the caſe. The one may be more dextrous, but is not one jot leſs faulty: for many times the deepeſt wounds are given by theſe ſmoother and more artificial ways of ſlander; as by aſking queſtions: "Have "you not heard ſo and ſo of ſuch a man? I ſay no more; "I only aſk the queſtion:" or by general intimations, that "they are loth to ſay what they have heard of ſuch "a one, are very ſorry for it, and do not at all believe "it," if you will believe them: and this many times without telling the thing, but leaving you in the dark to ſuſpect the worſt.

Theſe, and ſuch like arts, though they may ſeem to be tenderer and gentler ways of uſing mens reputation; yet in truth they are the moſt malicious and effectual methods of ſlander; becauſe they inſinuate ſomething that is much worſe than is ſaid, and yet are very apt to create in unwary men a ſtrong belief of ſomething that is very bad, though they know not what is. So that it matters not in what faſhion a ſlander is dreſſed up; if it tend to defame a man, and to diminiſh his reputation, it is the ſin forbidden in the text.

II. We will conſider the extent of this prohibition, *To ſpeak evil of no man*, and the due bounds and limitations of it. For it is not to be underſtood abſolutely, to forbid us to ſay any thing concerning others that is bad. This in ſome caſes may be neceſſary and our duty, and

in ſeveral caſes very fit and reaſonable. The queſtion is, In what caſes by the general rules of ſcripture and right reaſon we are warranted to ſay the evil of others that is true?

In general, we are not to do this without great reaſon and neceſſity; as for the prevention of ſome great evil, or the procuring of ſome conſiderable good to ourſelves, or others. And this I take to be the meaning of that advice of the ſon of Sirach, Ecclus xix. 8. *Whether it be to a friend or foe, talk not of other mens lives; and if thou canſt without offence, reveal them not*; that is, if without hurt to any body thou canſt conceal them, divulge them not.

But becauſe this may not be direction ſufficient, I ſhall inſtance in ſome of the principal caſes wherein men are warranted to ſpeak evil of others, and yet in ſo doing do not offend againſt this prohibition in the text.

1. It is not only lawful, but very commendable, and many times our duty to do this, in order to the probable amendment of the perſon of whom evil is ſpoken. In ſuch a caſe we may tell a man of his faults privately; or where it may not be ſo fit for us to uſe that boldneſs and freedom, we may reveal his faults to one who is more fit and proper to reprove him, and will probably make no other uſe of this diſcovery, but in order to his amendment. And this is ſo far from being a breach of charity, that it is one of the beſt teſtimonies of it. For perhaps the party may not be guilty of what hath been reported of him, and then it is a kindneſs to give him the opportunity of vindicating himſelf: or, if he be guilty, perhaps being privately and prudently told of it, he may reform. In this caſe the ſon of Sirach adviſeth to reveal mens faults, Ecclus xix. 13, 14, 15. *Admoniſh a friend*, (ſays he) *it may be he hath not done it: and if he have done it, that he do it no more. Admoniſh thy friend, it may be he hath not ſaid it: and if he have, that he ſpeak it not again. Admoniſh a friend: for many times it is a ſlander; and believe not every tale.*

But then we muſt take care that this be done out of kindneſs, and that nothing of our own paſſion be mingled with it; and that under pretence of reproving and reforming men, we do not reproach and revile them, and tell

tell them of their faults in ſuch a manner, as if we did it to ſhew our authority, rather than our charity. It requires a great deal of addreſs and gentle application, ſo to manage the buſineſs of reproof, as not to irritate and exaſperate the perſon whom we reprove, inſtead of curing him.

2. This likeways is not only lawful, but our duty, when we are legally called to bear witneſs concerning the fault and crime of another. A good man would not be an accuſer, unleſs the public good, or the prevention of ſome great evil, ſhould require it. And then the plain reaſon of the thing will ſufficiently juſtify a voluntary accuſation. Otherways it hath always among well-mannered people been eſteemed very odious for a man to be officious in this kind, and a forward informer concerning the miſdemeanor of others. Magiſtrates may ſometimes think it fit to give encouragement to ſuch perſons, and to ſet one bad man to catch another, becauſe ſuch men are fitteſt for ſuch dirty work: but they can never inwardly approve them, nor will they ever make them their friends and confidents.

But when a man is called to give teſtimony in this kind, in obedience to the laws, and out of reverence to the oath taken in ſuch caſes, he is ſo far from deſerving blame for ſo doing, that it would be an unpardonable fault in him to conceal the truth, or any part of it.

3. It is lawful to publiſh the faults of others, in our own neceſſary defence and vindication, when a man cannot conceal another's faults, without betraying his own innocency. No charity requires a man to ſuffer himſelf to be defamed, to ſave the reputation of another man. Charity begins at home. And though a man had never ſo much goodneſs, he would firſt ſecure his own good name, and then be concerned for other mens. We are *to love our neighbour as ourſelves*: ſo that the love of ourſelves is the rule and meaſure of our love to our neighbour: and therefore firſt, otherways it could not be the rule. And it would be very well for the world, if our charity would riſe thus high; and no man would hurt another man's reputation, but where his own is in real danger.

4. This alſo is lawful for caution and warning to a

third perſon that is in danger to be infected by the company or ill example of another; or may be greatly prejudiced by repoſing too much confidence in him, having no knowledge or ſuſpicion of his bad qualities: but even in this caſe we ought to take great care, that the ill character we give of any man be ſpread no further than is neceſſary to the good end we deſigned in it.

Beſides theſe more obvious and remarkable caſes, this prohibition doth not I think hinder, but that in ordinary converſation men may mention that ill of others which is already made as public as it well can be; or that one friend may not in freedom ſpeak to another of the miſcarriage of a third perſon, where he is ſecure no ill uſe will be made of it, and that it will go no further to his prejudice; provided always, that we take no delight in hearing or ſpeaking ill of others; and the leſs we do it, though without any malice or deſign of harm, ſtill the better; becauſe this ſhews that we do not feed upon ill reports, and take pleaſure in them.

Theſe are all the uſual caſes in which it may be neceſſary for us to ſpeak evil of other men. And theſe are ſo evidently reaſonable, that the prohibition in the text cannot with reaſon be extended to them. And if no man would allow himſelf to ſay any thing to the prejudice of another man's good name, but in theſe and the like caſes, the tongues of men would be very innocent, and the world would be very quiet. I proceed, in the

III. Third place, To conſider the evil of this practice, both in the cauſes, and the conſequences of it.

1. We will conſider the cauſes of it. And it commonly ſprings from one or more of theſe evil roots.

1ſt, One of the deepeſt and moſt common cauſes of *evil-ſpeaking*, is ill-nature, and cruelty of diſpoſition; and, by a general miſtake, ill-nature paſſeth for wit, as cunning doth for wiſdom; though in truth they are nothing a-kin to one another, but as far diſtant as vice and virtue.

And there is no greater evidence of the bad temper of mankind, than the general proneneſs of men to this vice: for (as our Saviour ſays) *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth ſpeaketh*. And therefore men do commonly incline to the cenſorious and uncharitable ſide; which ſhews

ſhews human nature to be ſtrangely diſtorted from its original rectitude and innocency. The wit of man doth more naturally vent itſelf in ſatyre and cenſure, than in praiſe and panegyric. When men ſet themſelves to commend, it comes hardly from them, and not without great force and ſtraining; and if any thing be fitly ſaid in that kind, it doth hardly reliſh with moſt men. But in the way of invective, the invention of men is a plentiful and never failing ſpring. And this kind of wit is not more eaſy, than it is acceptable: it is greedily entertained, and greatly applauded; and every man is glad to hear others abuſed, not conſidering how ſoon it may come to his own turn to lie down, and make ſport for others.

To ſpeak evil of others, is almoſt become the general entertainment of all companies: and the great and ſerious buſineſs of moſt meetings and viſits, after the neceſſary ceremonies and compliments are over, is, to ſit down and backbite all the world. It is the ſauce of converſation; and all diſcourſe is counted but flat and dull which hath not ſomething of piquancy and ſharpneſs in it againſt ſomebody. For men generally love rather to hear evil of others than good, and are ſecretly pleaſed with ill reports, and drink them in with greedineſs and delight: though, at the ſame time, they have ſo much juſtice, as to hate thoſe that propagate them; and ſo much wit as to conclude, that theſe very perſons will do the ſame for them in another place and company.

But eſpecially, if it concerns one of another party, and that differs from us in matters of religion; in this caſe, all parties ſeem to be agreed, that they do God great ſervice in blaſting the reputation of their adverſaries. And though they all pretend to be Chriſtians, and the diſciples of him who taught nothing but kindneſs, and meekneſs, and charity; yet it is ſtrange to ſee with what a ſavage and murderous diſpoſition they will fly at one another's reputation, and tear it in pieces: and whatever other ſcruples they may have, they make none to beſpatter one another in the moſt bitter and ſlanderous manner.

But if they hear any good of their adverſaries, with what nicety and caution do they receive it? how many

objections

objections do they raiſe againſt it? and with what coldneſs do they at laſt admit it? "It is very well (ſay they) "if it be true; I ſhall be glad to hear it confirmed: I "never heard ſo much good of him before. You are a "good man yourſelf, but have a care you be not de-"ceived."

Nay, it is well, if, to balance the matter, and ſet things even, they do not clap ſome infirmity and fault into the other ſcale, that ſo the enemy may not go off with flying colours.

But, on the other ſide, every man is a good and ſubſtantial author of an ill report. I do not apply this to any one ſort of men, though all are to blame this way: *Iliacos intra muros peccatur, et extra.* To ſpeak impartially, the zealots of all parties have got a ſcurvy trick of lying for the truth.

But of all ſorts of people, I have obſerved the prieſts and bigots of the church of Rome to be the ableſt in this way, and to have the ſtrongeſt faith for a luſty falſhood and calumny. Others will bandy a falſe report, and toſs it from one hand to another; but I never knew any that would ſo hug a lie, and be ſo very fond of it. They ſeem to be deſcribed by St. John in that expreſſion in the Revelation, *Whoſoever loveth and maketh a lie.*

Another ſhrewd ſign that ill-nature lies at the root of this vice, is, that we eaſily forget the good that is ſaid of others, and ſeldom make mention of it; but the contrary ſticks with us, and lies uppermoſt in our memories, and is ready to come out upon all occaſions: and, which is yet more ill-natured and unjuſt, many times when we do not believe it ourſelves, we tell it to others, with this charitable caution, that we hope it is not true; but, in the mean time, we give it our paſs, and venture it to take its fortune to be believed or not, according to the charity of thoſe into whoſe hands it comes.

2dly, Another cauſe of the commonneſs of this vice is, that many are ſo bad themſelves in one kind or other. For to think and ſpeak ill of others, is not only a bad thing, but a ſign of a bad man. Our bleſſed Saviour, ſpeaking of the evil of the laſt days, gives this as the reaſon of the great decay of charity among men, Matth. xxiv. 12. *Becauſe iniquity ſhall abound, the love of many ſhall*

ſhall wax cold. When men are bad themſelves, they are glad of any opportunity to cenſure others, and are always apt to ſuſpect that evil of other men which they know by themſelves. They cannot have a good opinion of themſelves, and therefore are very unwilling to have ſo of any body elſe; and for this reaſon they endeavour to bring men to a level, hoping it will be ſome juſtification of them if they can but render others as bad as themſelves.

3dly, Another ſource of this vice, is malice and revenge. When men are in heat and paſſion, they do not conſider what is true, but what is ſpiteful and miſchievous; and ſpeak evil of others in revenge of ſome injury which they have received from them; and when they are blinded by their paſſions, they lay about them madly, and at a venture, not much caring whether the evil they ſpeak be true or not. Nay, many are ſo deviliſh, as to invent and raiſe falſe reports, on purpoſe to blaſt mens reputation. This is a diabolical temper; and therefore St. James tells us, that the ſlanderous *tongue is ſet on fire of hell:* and the devil hath his very name from calumny and falſe accuſation; and it is his nature too, for he is always ready to ſtir up and foment this evil ſpirit among men: nay, the ſcripture tells us, that he hath the malice and impudence to accuſe good men before God, as he did Job, charging him with hypocriſy to God himſelf, *who* (he knows) *does know the hearts of all the children of men.*

4thly, Another cauſe of evil ſpeaking, is envy. Men look with an evil eye upon the good that is in others, and think that their reputation obſcures them, and that their commendable qualities do ſtand in their light; and therefore they do what they can to caſt a cloud over them, that the bright ſhining of their virtues may not ſcorch them. This makes them greedily to entertain, and induſtriouſly to publiſh any thing that may ſerve to that purpoſe, thereby to raiſe themſelves upon the ruins of other mens reputation: and therefore, as ſoon as they have got an ill report of any good man by the end, to work they preſently go, to ſend it abroad by the firſt poſt; for the ſtring is always ready upon their bow to let fly this arrow, with an incredible ſwiftneſs, through city and

and country; for fear the innocent man's juſtification ſhould overtake it.

5*thly*, Another cauſe of evil-ſpeaking, is impertinence and curioſity; an itch of talking and meddling in the affairs of other men, which do no ways concern them. Some perſons love to mingle themſelves in all buſineſs, and are loth to ſeem ignorant of ſo important a piece of news, as the faults and follies of men, or any bad thing that is talked of in good company. And therefore they do with great care pick up ill ſtories, as good matter of diſcourſe in the next company that is worthy of them: and this perhaps not out of any great malice, but for want of ſomething better to talk of, and becauſe their parts lie chiefly that way.

6*thly*, Laſtly, Men do this many times out of wantonneſs, and for diverſion. So little do light and vain men conſider, that a man's reputation is too great and tender a concernment to be jeſted withal; and that a ſlanderous tongue *bites like a ſerpent, and wounds like a ſword.* For what can be more barbarous, next to ſporting with a man's life, than to play with his honour and reputation, which to ſome men is dearer to them than their lives?

It is a cruel pleaſure which ſome men take in worrying the reputation of others much better than themſelves, and this only to divert themſelves and the company. Solomon compares this ſort of men to diſtracted perſons: *As a madman* (ſaith he) *who caſteth fire-brands, arrows, and death; ſo is the man that deceiveth his neighbour*, (the LXX render it, *ſo is the man that defameth his neighbour,) and ſaith, Am not I in ſport?* Such, and ſo bad are the cauſes of this vice. I proceed to conſider, in the

2. Second place, the ordinary, but very pernicious conſequences and effects of it; both to others, and to ourſelves.

1*ſt*, To others; the parties I mean that are ſlandered. To them it is certainly a great injury, and commonly a high provocation, but always matter of no ſmall grief and trouble to them.

It is certainly a great injury, and, if the evil which we ſay of them be not true, it is an injury beyond imagination, and beyond all poſſible reparation. And though

though we ſhould do our utmoſt endeavour afterwards towards their vindication; yet that makes but very little amends, becauſe the vindication ſeldom reacheth ſo far as the reproach, and becauſe commonly men are neither ſo forward to ſpread the vindication, nor is it ſo eaſily received after ill impreſſions are once made. The ſollicitous vindication of a man's ſelf is, at the beſt, but an after game; and for the moſt part a man had better ſit ſtill, than to run the hazard of making the matter worſe by playing it.

I will add one thing more, that it is an injury that deſcends to a man's children and poſterity; becauſe the good or ill name of the father is derived down to them; and many times the beſt thing he hath to leave them, is the reputation of his unblemiſhed virtue and worth. And do we make no conſcience to rob his innocent children of the beſt part of this ſmall patrimony, and of all the kindneſs that would have been done them for their father's ſake, if his reputation had not been ſo undeſervedly ſtained? Is it no crime, by the breath of our mouth, at once to blaſt a man's reputation, and to ruin his children, perhaps to all poſterity? Can we make a jeſt of ſo ſerious a matter? of an injury ſo very hard to be repented of as it ought, becauſe, in ſuch a caſe, no repentance will be acceptable without reſtitution, if it be in our power? And perhaps it will undo us in this world to make it; and, if we do it not, will be our ruin in the other.

I will put the caſe at the beſt, that the matter of the ſlander is true; yet no man's reputation is conſiderably ſtained, though never ſo deſervedly, without great harm and damage to him. And it is great odds but the matter, by paſſing through ſeveral hands, is aggravated beyond truth, every one, out of his bounty, being apt to add ſomething to it.

But, beſides the injury, it is commonly a very high provocation; and the conſequence of that may be as bad as we can imagine, and may end in dangerous and deſperate quarrels. This reaſon the wiſe ſon of Sirach gives why we ſhould defame no man, Ecclus xix. 8, 9. *Whether it be* (ſays he) *to a friend or foe, talk not of other mens lives. For he hath heard and obſerved thee,* (that

(that is, one way or other it will probably come to his knowledge,) *and when the time cometh, he will ſhew his hatred*; that is, he will take the firſt opportunity to revenge it.

At the beſt. it is always matter of grief to the perſon that is defamed. And Chriſtianity, which is the beſt natured inſtitution in the world, forbids us the doing of thoſe things whereby we may grieve one another. A man's good name is a tender thing, and a wound there ſinks deep into the ſpirit even of a wiſe and good man: and the more innocent any man is in this kind, the more ſenſible is he of this hard uſage; becauſe he never treats others ſo, nor is he conſcious to himſelf that he hath deſerved it.

2*dly*, The conſequences of this vice are as bad or worſe to ourſelves. Whoever is wont to ſpeak evil of others, gives a bad character of himſelf, even to thoſe whom he deſires to pleaſe; who, if they be wiſe enough, will conclude, that he ſpeaks of them to others, as he does of others to them; and were it not for that fond partiality which men have for themſelves, no man could be ſo blind as not to ſee this.

And it is very well worthy of our conſideration, which our Saviour ſays in this very caſe, Matth. vii. 2. that *with what meaſure we mete to others, it ſhall be meaſured to us again*; and that many times heaped up and running over; for there is hardly any thing wherein mankind do uſe more ſtrict juſtice and equality, than *in rendering evil for evil, and railing for railing*.

Nay, revenge often goes further than words. A reproachful and ſlanderous ſpeech hath coſt many a man a duel, and in that the loſs of his own life, or the murder of another, perhaps with the loſs of his own ſoul. And I have often wondered, that among Chriſtians this matter is no more laid to heart.

And though neither of theſe great miſchiefs ſhould happen to us, yet this may be inconvenient enough many other ways; for no man knows, in the chance of things, and the mutability of human affairs, whoſe kindneſs and good-will he may come to ſtand in need of before he dies. So that did a man only conſult his own ſafety and quiet, he ought to refrain from evil-

ſpeaking:

ſpeaking: Pſal. xxxiv. 12. 13. *What man is he* (ſaith the Pſalmiſt) *that deſireth life, and loveth many days, that he may ſee good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from ſpeaking falſhood.*

But there is an infinitely greater danger hanging over us from God. If we allow ourſelves in this evil practice, all our religion is good for nothing. So St. James expreſsly tells us, chap. i. 26. *If any man among you ſeem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.* And St. Paul puts ſlanderers and revilers amongſt thoſe that *ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God*, 1 Cor. vi. 10. And our bleſſed Saviour hath told us, that *by our words we ſhall be juſtified, and by our words we ſhall be condemned.* To which I will add the counſel given us by the wiſe man, (Wiſdom of Solomon, chap. i. 11.) *Refrain your tongue from backbiting: for there is no word ſo ſecret, that ſhall go for nought; and the mouth that ſlandereth, ſlayeth the ſoul.* I proceed, in the

IV. Fourth place, to add ſome further arguments and conſiderations to take men off from this vice. As,

1. That the uſe of ſpeech is a peculiar prerogative of man above other creatures, and beſtowed upon him for ſome excellent end and purpoſe; that by this faculty we might communicate our thoughts more eaſily to one another, and conſult together for our mutual comfort and benefit; not to enable us to be hurtful and injurious, but helpful and beneficial to one another. The Pſalmiſt, as by interpreters is generally thought, calls our tongue our *glory*; therewith we *praiſe God* and *bleſs men* Now, to bleſs is to ſpeak well of any, and to wiſh them well. So that we pervert the uſe of ſpeech, and turn our glory into ſhame, when we abuſe this faculty, to the injury and reproach of any.

2. Conſider how cheap a kindneſs it is to ſpeak well, at leaſt not to ſpeak ill of any. A good word is an eaſy obligation; but not to ſpeak ill requires only our ſilence, which coſts us nothing. Some inſtances of charity are chargeable, as to relieve the wants and neceſſities of others. The expence deters many from this kind of charity. But were a man never ſo covetous, he might af-

ford another man his good word; at leaſt he might refrain from ſpeaking ill of him; eſpecially if it be conſidered how dear many have paid for a ſlanderous and reproachful word.

3. Conſider that no quality doth ordinarily recommend one more to the favour and good will of men, than to be free from this vice. Every one deſires ſuch a man's friendſhip, and is apt to repoſe a great truſt and confidence in him; and when he is dead, men will praiſe him. And, next to piety towards God, and righteouſneſs to man, nothing is thought a more ſignificant commendation, than that he was never, or very rarely, heard to ſpeak ill of any. It was a ſingular character of a Roman gentleman, *Neſcivit quid eſſet maledicere:* "He knew not what it was to give any man an ill "word."

4. Let every man lay his hand upon his heart, and conſider how himſelf is apt to be affected with this uſage. Speak thy conſcience, man, and ſay, whether, as bad as thou art, thou wouldſt not be glad to have every man's, eſpecially every good man's good word; and to have thy faults concealed; and not to be hardly ſpoken of, though it may be not altogether without truth, by thoſe whom thou didſt never offend by word or deed? But with what face or reaſon doſt thou expect this from others, to whom thy carriage hath been ſo contrary? Nothing ſurely is more equal and reaſonable, than that known rule, "What thou wouldſt have "no man do to thee, that do thou to no man."

5. When you are going to ſpeak reproachfully of others, conſider whether you do not ly open to juſt reproach in the ſame, or ſome other kind. Therefore give no occaſion, no example of this barbarous uſage of one another.

There are very few ſo innocent and free, either from infirmities or greater faults, as not to be obnoxious to reproach upon one account or other. Even the wiſeſt, and moſt virtuous, and moſt perfect amongſt men, have ſome little vanity or affectation, which lays them open to the raillery of a mimical and malicious wit: therefore we ſhould often turn our thoughts upon ourſelves, and look into that part of the wallet which men commonly

monly fling over their ſhoulders, and keep behind them, that they may not ſee their own faults; and when we have ſearched that well, let us remember our Saviour's rule, *He that is without ſin, let him caſt the firſt ſtone.*

6. Laſtly, Conſider, that it is in many caſes as great a charity to conceal the evil you hear and know of others, as if you relieved them in a great neceſſity. And we think him a hard-hearted man that will not beſtow a ſmall alms upon one in great want. It is an excellent advice which the ſon of Sirach gives to this purpoſe, Eccluſ xix. 10. *Talk not of other mens lives: If thou haſt heard a word, let it die with thee; and be bold, it will not burſt thee.* I ſhall, in the

V. Fifth and laſt place, give ſome rules and directions for the prevention and cure of this great evil among men.

1. Never ſay any evil of any man, but what you certainly know. Whenever you poſitively accuſe and indite any man of any crime, though it be in private and among friends, ſpeak as if you were upon your oath, becauſe God ſees and hears you. This, not only charity, but juſtice, and regard to truth, do demand of us. He that eaſily credits an ill report, is almoſt as faulty as the firſt inventer of it: for though you do not make, yet you commonly propagate a lie. Therefore never ſpeak evil of any upon common fame, which, for the moſt part, is falſe; but almoſt always uncertain, whether it be true or not.

Not but that it is a fault, in moſt caſes, to report the evil of men which is true, and which we certainly know to be ſo; but if I cannot prevail to make men wholly to abſtain from this fault, I would be glad to compound with ſome perſons, and to gain this point of them however; becauſe it would retrench nine parts in ten of the evil-ſpeaking that is in the world.

2. Before you ſpeak evil of any man, conſider whether he hath not obliged you by ſome real kindneſs? and then it is a bad return to ſpeak ill of him who hath done us good. Conſider alſo, whether you may not come hereafter to be acquainted with him, related to him, or obliged by him whom you have thus injured? and how will you then be aſhamed, when you re-

fleſt upon it; and perhaps have reaſon alſo to believe, that he to whom you have done this injury, is not ignorant of it?

Conſider likewiſe, whether, in the chance of human affairs, you may not ſome time or other come to ſtand in need of his favour; and how incapable this carriage of your's towards him will render you of it? and whether it may not be in his power to revenge a ſpiteful and needleſs word by a ſhrewd turn? So that if a man made no conſcience of hurting others, yet he ſhould in prudence have ſome conſideration of himſelf.

3. Let us accuſtom ourſelves to pity the faults of men, and to be truly ſorry for them; and then we ſhall take no pleaſure in publiſhing them. And this common humanity requires of us; conſidering the great infirmities of human nature, and that we ourſelves alſo are liable to be tempted; conſidering likewiſe, how ſevere a puniſhment every fault and miſcarriage is to itſelf, and how terribly it expoſeth a man to the wrath of God, both in this world and the other. He is not a good Chriſtian, that is not heartily ſorry for the faults even of his greateſt enemies; and if it be ſo, he will diſcover them no farther than is neceſſary to ſome good end.

4. Whenever we hear any man evil-ſpoken of, if we know any good of him, let us ſay that. It is always the more humane and the more honourable part, to ſtand up in the defence and vindication of others, than to accuſe and beſpatter them. Poſſibly the good you have heard of them may not be true; but it is much more probable, that the evil which you have heard of them is not true neither: however, it is better to preſerve the credit of a bad man, than to ſtain the reputation of the innocent. And if there were any need that a man ſhould be evil ſpoken of, it is but fair and equal that his good and bad qualities ſhould be mentioned together; otherwiſe he may be ſtrangely miſrepreſented, and an indifferent man may be made a monſter.

They that will obſerve nothing in a wiſe man, but his overſights and follies; nothing in a good man, but his failings and infirmities; may make a ſhift to render a very wiſe and good man very deſpicable. If one ſhould

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heap together all the paſſionate ſpeeches, all the froward and imprudent actions of the beſt man, all that he had ſaid or done amiſs in his whole life, and preſent it all at one view, concealing his wiſdom and virtues; the man, in this diſguiſe, would look like a mad man or a fury: and yet, if his life were fairly repreſented, and juſt in the ſame manner it was led, and his many and great virtues ſet over againſt his failings and infirmities, he would appear to all the world to be an admirable and excellent perſon. But how many and great ſoever any man's ill qualities are, it is but juſt, that, with all this heavy load of faults, he ſhould have the due praiſe of the few real virtues that are in him.

5. That you may not ſpeak ill of any, do not delight to hear ill of them. Give no countenance to buſy-bodies, and thoſe that love to talk of other mens faults: or, if you cannot decently reprove them becauſe of their quality, then divert the diſcourſe ſome other way; or, if you cannot do that, by ſeeming not to mind it, you may ſufficiently ſignify that you do not like it.

6. Let every man mind himſelf, and his own duty and concernment. Do but endeavour in good earneſt to mend thyſelf, and it will be work enough for one man, and leave thee but little time to talk of others. When Plato withdrew from the court of Dionyſius, who would fain have had a famous philoſopher for his flatterer, they parted in ſome unkindneſs, and Dionyſius bade him not ſpeak ill of him when he was returned into Greece. Plato told him, He had no leiſure for it; meaning, that he had better things to mind, than to take up his thoughts and talk with the faults of ſo bad a man, ſo notoriouſly known to all the world.

7. Laſtly, Let us ſet a watch before the door of our lips, and not ſpeak but upon conſideration: I do not mean to ſpeak finely, but fitly. Eſpecially when thou ſpeakeſt of others, conſider of whom, and what thou art going to ſpeak. Uſe great caution and circumſpection in this matter. Look well about thee, on every ſide of the thing, and on every perſon in the company, before thy words ſlip from thee; which, when they are once out of thy lips, are for ever out of thy power.

Not that men ſhould be ſullen in company, and ſay nothing; nor ſo ſtiff in converſation, as to drop nothing but aphoriſms and oracles. Eſpecially among equals and friends, we ſhould not be ſo reſerved, as if we would have it taken for a mighty favour that we vouchſafe to ſay any thing. If a man had the underſtanding of an angel, he muſt be contented to abate ſomething of this exceſs of wiſdom, for fear of being thought cunning. The true art of converſation, if any body can hit upon it, ſeems to be this; an appearing freedom and openneſs, with a reſolute reſervedneſs as little appearing as is poſſible.

All that I mean by this caution is, that we ſhould conſider well what we ſay, eſpecially of others. And to this end, we ſhould endeavour to get our minds furniſhed with matter of diſcourſe concerning things uſeful in themſelves, and not hurtful to others. And, if we have but a mind wiſe enough, and good enough, we may eaſily find a field large enough for innocent converſation, ſuch as will harm no body, and yet be acceptable enough to the better and wiſer part of mankind. And why ſhould any one be at the coſt of playing the fool, to gratify any body whatſoever?

I have done with the five things I propounded to ſpeak to upon this argument. But, becauſe hardly any thing can be ſo clear, but ſomething may be ſaid againſt it; nor any thing ſo bad, but ſomething may be pleaded in excuſe for it, I ſhall therefore take notice of two or three pleas that may be made for it:

1. Some pretend mighty injury and provocation. If in the ſame kind, it ſeems thou art ſenſible of it; and therefore thou of all men oughteſt to abſtain from it. But in what kind ſoever it be, the Chriſtian religion forbids revenge. Therefore do not plead one ſin in excuſe of another, and make revenge an apology for reviling.

2. It is alledged by others, with a little better grace, that if this doctrine were practiſed, converſation would be ſpoiled, and there would not be matter enough for pleaſant diſcourſe and entertainment.

I anſwer, the deſign of this diſcourſe is, to redreſs a great evil in converſation, and that, I hope, which

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mends it, will not ſpoil it. And however, if mens tongues lay a little more ſtill, and moſt of us ſpake a good deal leſs than we do, both of ourſelves and others, I ſee no great harm in it: I hope we might for all that live comfortably and in good health, and ſee many good days. David, I am ſure, preſcribes it as an excellent receipt, in his opinion, for a quiet, and chearful, and long life, to refrain from evil-ſpeaking: Pſal. xxxiv. 12, 13. *What man is he that deſireth life, and loveth many days, that he may ſee good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and lips from ſpeaking falſhood.*

But granting that there is ſome pleaſure in invective, I hope there is a great deal more in innocence: and the more any man conſiders this, the truer he will find it; and whenever we are ſerious, we ourſelves cannot but acknowledge it. When a man examines himſelf impartially before the ſacrament, or is put in mind upon a deathbed, to make reparation for injuries done in this kind, he will then certainly be of this mind, and wiſh he had not done them. For this certainly is one neceſſary qualification for the bleſſed ſacrament, that we be in love and charity with our neighbours; with which temper of mind this quality is utterly inconſiſtent.

3. There is yet a more ſpecious plea than either of the former, that men will be encouraged to do ill, if they can eſcape the tongues of men; as they would do, if this doctrine did effectually take place: becauſe by this means, one great reſtraint from doing evil would be taken away, which theſe good men, who are ſo bent upon reforming the world, think would be great pity. For many who will venture upon the diſpleaſure of God, will yet abſtain from doing bad things for fear of reproach from men: beſides that this ſeems the moſt proper puniſhment of many faults which the laws of men can take no notice of.

Admitting all this to be true, yet it does not ſeem ſo good and laudable a way, to puniſh one fault by another. But let no man encourage himſelf in an evil way, with this hope that he ſhall eſcape the cenſure of men. When I have ſaid all I can, there will, I fear, be evil-ſpeaking enough in the world to chaſtiſe them that do ill: though we ſhould hold our peace, there will be bad

bad tongues enough to reproach men with their evil-doings. I wish we could but be persuaded to make the experiment for a little while, whether men would not be sufficiently lashed for their faults, though we sat by and said nothing.

So that there is no need at all that good men should be concerned in this odious work. There will always be offenders and malefactors enough to be the executioners to inflict this punishment upon one another. Therefore let no man presume upon impunity on the one hand; and, on the other, let no man despair, but that this business will be sufficiently done one way or other. I am very much mistaken, if we may not safely trust an ill-natured world that there will be no failure of justice in this kind.

And here, if I durst, I would have said a word or two concerning that more public sort of obloquy by lampoons and libels, so much in fashion in this witty age. But I have no mind to provoke a very terrible sort of men. Yet thus much I hope may be said without offence, that how much soever men are pleased to see others abused in this kind, yet it is always grievous when it comes to their own turn. However, I cannot but hope, that every man that impartially considers, must own it to be a fault of a very high nature, to revile those whom God hath placed in authority over us, and to slander the footsteps of the Lord's anointed; especially since it is so expressly written, *Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.*

Having represented the great evil of this vice, it might not now be improper to say something to those who suffer by it. Are we guilty of the evil said of us? Let us reform, and cut off all occasions for the future; and so turn the malice of our enemies to our own advantage, and defeat their ill intentions by making so good an use of it; and then it will be well for us to have been evil spoken of.

Are we innocent? We may so much the better bear it patiently; imitating herein the pattern of our blessed Saviour, *who when he was reviled, reviled not again; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.*

We may consider likewise, that though it be a misfortune

tune to be evil ſpoken of, it is their fault that do it, and not ours; and therefore ſhould not put us into paſſion; becauſe another man's being injurious to me, is no good reaſon why I ſhould be uneaſy to myſelf. We ſhould not revenge the injuries done to us, no not upon them that do them, much leſs upon ourſelves. Let no man's provocation make thee to loſe thy patience. Be not ſuch a fool, as to part with any one virtue, becauſe ſome men are ſo malicious, as to endeavour to rob thee of the reputation of all the reſt. When men ſpeak ill of thee, do as Plato ſaid he would do in that caſe, "live "ſo, as no body may believe them."

All that now remains, is, to reflect upon what hath been ſaid, and to urge you and myſelf to do accordingly: for all is nothing if we do not practiſe what we ſo plainly ſee to be our duty. Many are ſo taken with the deep points and myſteries of religion, that they never think of the common duties and offices of human life. But faith and a good life are ſo far from claſhing with one another, that the Chriſtian religion hath made them inſeparable. True faith is neceſſary in order to a good life, and a good life is the genuine product of a right belief; and therefore the one never ought to be preſſed to the prejudice of the other.

I foreſee what will be ſaid, becauſe I have heard it ſo often ſaid in the like caſe, that there is not one word of Jeſus Chriſt in all this. No more is there in the text. And yet I hope that Jeſus Chriſt is truly preached, whenever his will and laws, and the duties injoined by the Chriſtian religion, are inculcated upon us.

But ſome men are pleaſed to ſay, that this is mere morality. I anſwer, That this is ſcripture morality and Chriſtian morality; and who hath any thing to ſay againſt that? Nay, I will go yet farther, that no man ought to pretend to believe the Chriſtian religion, who lives in the neglect of ſo plain a duty, and in the practice of a ſin ſo clearly condemned by it, as this of evil-ſpeaking is.

But becauſe *the word of God is quick and powerful, and ſharper than a two-edged ſword*, yea ſharper than calumny itſelf, and pierceth the very hearts and conſciences of men, laying us open to ourſelves, and convincing us

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of our more secret, as well as our more visible faults; I shall therefore at one view represent to you what is dispersedly said concerning this sin in the holy word of God.

And I have purposely reserved this to the last, because it is more persuasive and penetrating than any human discourse. And to this end, be pleased to consider in what company the Holy Ghost doth usually mention this sin. There is scarce any black catalogue of sins in the Bible, but we find this among them; in the company of the very worst actions and most irregular passions of men. Math. xv. 19. *Out of the heart* (says our Saviour) *proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, false-witness, evil speakings.* And, Rom. i. 29, 30. the Apostle ranks *backbiters* with *fornicators*, and *murderers*, and *haters of God*; and with those of whom it is expressly said, 1 Cor. vi. 10. that *they shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

And when he enumerates the sins of the *last times*, *Men* (says he, 2 [illegible]) *shall be lovers of themselves, [illegible], without natural affection, [illegible], false accusers*, &c. And, which is the strangest of all, they who are said to be guilty of these great vices and enormities, are noted by the Apostle to be great pretenders to religion: for so it follows in the next words; *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.* So that it is no new thing for men to make a more than ordinary profession of Christianity, and yet at the same time to live in a most palpable contradiction to the precepts of that holy religion; as if any pretence to mystery, and I know what extraordinary attainments in the knowledge of Christ, could exempt men from obedience to his laws, and set them above the virtues of a good life.

And now, after all this, do we hardly think that to be a sin, which is in scripture so frequently ranked with murder and adultery, and the blackest crimes; such as are inconsistent with the life and power of religion, and will certainly shut men out of the kingdom of God? Do we believe the Bible to be the word of God; and can we allow ourselves in the common practice of a sin, than which there is hardly any fault of mens lives more frequently

quently mentioned, more ſeverely reproved, and more odiouſly branded in that holy book?

Conſider ſeriouſly theſe texts: Pſal. xv. 1. *Who ſhall abide in thy tabernacle, who ſhall dwell in thy holy hill? He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor taketh up a reproach againſt his neighbour.* Have ye never heard what our Saviour ſays, that *of every idle word we muſt give an account in the day of judgment*; that *by thy words thou ſhalt be juſtified, and by thy words thou ſhalt be condemned?* What can be more ſevere than that of St. James: *If any man among you ſeem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, this man's religion is vain?*

To conclude: the ſin which I have now warned men againſt, is plainly condemned by the word of God; and the duty which I have now been perſuading you to, is eaſy for every man to underſtand; not hard for any man, that can but reſolve to keep a good guard upon himſelf for ſome time, by the grace of God, to practiſe; and moſt reaſonable for all men, but eſpecially for all Chriſtians, to obſerve. It is as eaſy as a reſolute ſilence upon juſt occaſion; as reaſonable as prudence, and juſtice, and charity, and the preſervation of peace and good will among men, can make it; and of as neceſſary and indiſpenſable an obligation as the authority of God can render any thing.

Upon all which conſiderations, let us every one of us be perſuaded to take up David's deliberate reſolution, Pſal. xxxix. 1. *I ſaid I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my tongue.* And I do verily believe, that, would we but heartily endeavour to amend this one fault, we ſhould ſoon be better men in our whole lives; I mean, that the correcting of this vice, together with thoſe that are nearly allied to it, and may, at the ſame time, and almoſt with the ſame reſolution and care, be corrected, would make us owners of a great many conſiderable virtues, and carry us on a good way towards perfection; it being hardly to be imagined, that a man that makes conſcience of his words ſhould not take an equal or a greater care of his actions. And this I take to be both the true meaning, and the true reaſon, of that ſaying of St. James, and with which I ſhall conclude, *If any man offend not in word, the ſame is a perfect man.*

Now-

Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great shepherd of the sheep, thro' the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good word and *work to do his will, working in you* always *that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever. Amen.*

Concerning the divinity and incarnation of our blessed Saviour.

An ADVERTISEMENT to the Reader.

THE following sermons were preached several years ago in the church of St. Lawrence-Jewry, in London; and, being now revised and enlarged by the author, are here made public. The true reason whereof was not that which is commonly alledged for printing books, the importunity of friends; but the importunate clamours and malicious calumnies of others, whom the author heartily prays God to forgive, and to give them better minds; and to grant that the ensuing discourses, the publication whereof was in so great a degree necessary, may by his blessing prove in some measure useful.

SERMON XLIII.

Concerning the divinity of our blessed Saviour.

Preached in the church of St. Lawrence-Jewry, December 30. 1679.

JOHN i. 14.

The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.

The first sermon on this text.

THese words contain in them three great points concerning our blessed Saviour, the author and founder of our faith and religion.

In His

1. His incarnation: *The Word was made* (or became) *fleſh.*

2. His life and converſation here among us; *And dwelt among us,* ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, *he pitched his tabernacle amongſt us:* he lived here below in this world, and, for a time, made his reſidence and abode with us.

3. That in this ſtate of his humiliation he gave great and clear evidence of his divinity. Whilſt he appeared as a man, and lived amongſt us, there were great and glorious teſtimonies given of him, that he was the Son of God; and that in ſo peculiar a manner as no creature can be ſaid to be: *And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,* &c.

I ſhall begin with the firſt of theſe, his incarnation, as moſt proper for this ſolemn time, which hath for many ages been ſet apart for the commemoration of the nativity and incarnation of our bleſſed Saviour. *The Word was made fleſh*; that is, he who is perſonally called *the Word*, and whom the Evangeliſt St. John had ſo fully deſcribed in the beginning of this goſpel, he became fleſh; that is, aſſumed our nature, and became man. For ſo the word *fleſh* is frequently uſed in ſcripture for man, or human nature: Pſal. lxv. 2. *O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee ſhall all fleſh come*; that is, to thee ſhall all men addreſs their ſupplications. Again, If. xl. 5, 6. *The glory of the Lord ſhall be revealed, and all fleſh ſhall ſee it together*; that is, all men ſhall behold and acknowledge it; and then it follows, *All fleſh is graſs*, ſpeaking of the frailty and mortality of man. And ſo likewiſe, in the New Teſtament, our bleſſed Saviour, foretelling the miſery that was coming upon the Jewiſh nation, ſays, Matth. xxiv. 22. *Except thoſe days ſhould be ſhortened, no fleſh ſhould be ſaved*; that is, no man ſhould eſcape and ſurvive that great calamity and deſtruction which was coming upon them: Gal. ii. 16. *By the works of the law* (ſays the Apoſtle) *ſhall no fleſh* (that is, no man) *be juſtified.*

So that, by *the Word's being made* (or becoming) *fleſh*, the Evangeliſt did not intend that he aſſumed only a human body without a ſoul, and was united only to a human body, which was the hereſy of Apollinaris and his followers; but that he became man, that is, aſſumed the

whole human nature, body and soul. And it is likewise very probable, that the Evangelist did purposely chuse the word *flesh*, which signifies the frail and mortal part of man, to denote to us, that the Son of God did assume our nature, with all its infirmities, and became subject to the common frailty and mortality of human nature.

The words thus explained, contain that *great mystery of godliness*, as the Apostle calls it, or of the Christian religion, *viz.* the incarnation of the Son of God, which St. Paul expresseth by the appearance or manifestation of God in the flesh, 1 Tim. iii. 16. *And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifested in the flesh*; that is, he appeared in human nature, he became man; or, as St. John expresseth it in the text, *The Word was made flesh.*

But, for the more clear and full explication of these words, we will consider these two things.

1. The person that is here spoken of, and who is said to be incarnate, or to be *made flesh*, namely, the Word.

2. The mystery itself, or the nature of this incarnation, so far as the scripture hath revealed and declared it to us.

First, We will consider the person that is here spoken of, and who is said to be incarnate, or to be *made flesh*, and who is so frequently in this chapter called by the name or title of *the Word*, namely, the eternal and only begotten Son of God; for so we find him described in the text. *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father*, &c.; that is, such as became so great and glorious a person as deserves the title of *the only begotten Son of God.*

For the explaining of this name or title of *the Word*, given by St. John to our blessed Saviour, we will consider these two things.

1. The reason of this name or title of *the Word*, and what probably might be the occasion why this Evangelist insists so much upon it, and makes so frequent mention of it.

2. The description itself, which is given of him under

der this name or title of *the Word*, by this Evangeliſt, in his entrance into his hiſtory of the goſpel.

I. We will inquire into the reaſon of this name or title of *the Word*, which is here given to our bleſſed Saviour by this Evangeliſt; and what might probably be the occaſion why he inſiſts ſo much upon it, and makes ſo frequent mention of it. I ſhall conſider theſe two things diſtinctly and ſeverally.

1. The reaſon of this name or title of *the Word* here given by the Evangeliſt to our bleſſed Saviour. And he ſeems to have done it in compliance with the common way of ſpeaking among the Jews, who frequently call the Meſſias by the name of *the Word of the Lord*. Of which I might give many inſtances; but there is one very remarkable, in the Targum of Jonathan, which renders thoſe words of the Pſalmiſt, which the Jews acknowledge to be ſpoken of the Meſſias, *viz. The Lord ſaid unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand*, &c.; I ſay, it renders them thus: *The Lord ſaid unto his Word, Sit thou on my right hand*, &c. And ſo likewiſe Philo the Jew calls him by whom God made the world, *the Word of God*, and *the Son of God*. And Plato probably had the ſame notion from the Jews; which made Amelius the Platoniſt, when he read the beginning of St. John's goſpel, to ſay, "This barbarian agrees with Plato, ranking the "Word in the order of principles;" meaning, that he made the Word the principle or efficient cauſe of the world, as Plato alſo hath done.

And this title of *the Word* was ſo famouſly known to be given to the Meſſias, that even the enemies of Chriſtianity took notice of it. Julian the Apoſtate calls Chriſt by this name; and Mahomet, in his Alcoran, gives this name of *the Word* to Jeſus the Son of Mary. But St. John had probably no reference to Plato, any otherwiſe than as the Gnoſticks, againſt whom he wrote, made uſe of ſeveral of Plato's words and notions. So that, in all probability, St. John gives our bleſſed Saviour this title with regard to the Jews more eſpecially, who anciently called the Meſſias by this name.

2. We will, in the next place, conſider what might probably be the occaſion why this Evangeliſt makes ſo frequent mention of this title of *the Word*, and inſiſts

so much upon it. And it seems to be this; nay I think that hardly any doubt can be made of it, since the most ancient of the fathers, who lived nearest the time of St. John, do confirm it to us.

St. John, who survived all the Apostles, lived to see those heresies which sprung up in the beginnings of Christianity, during the lives of the Apostles, grown up to a great height, to the great prejudice and disturbance of the Christian religion; I mean the heresies of Ebion and Cerinthus, and the several sects of the Gnosticks, which began from Simon Magus, and were continued and carried on by Valentinus and Basilides, Carpocrates and Menander. Some of which expressly denied the divinity of our Saviour, asserting him to have been a mere man, and to have had no manner of existence before he was born of the blessed virgin; as Eusebius and Epiphanius tell us particularly concerning Ebion: which those who hold the same opinion now in our days may do well to consider from whence it had its original.

Others of them, I still mean the Gnosticks, had corrupted the simplicity of the Christian doctrine, by mingling with it the fancies and conceits of the Jewish Cabbalists, and of the schools of Pythagoras and Plato, and of the Chaldean philosophy, more ancient than either; as may be seen in *Eusebius de præparat. evan.*; and, by jumbling all these together, they had framed a confused genealogy of deities, which they call by several glorious names, and all of them by the general name of *Æons* or *Ages*, among which they reckoned Ζώη, and Λόγος, and Μονογενὴς and Πλήρωμα, that is, *the Life*, and *the Word*, and *the Only Begotten*, and *the Fulness*, and many other divine powers and emanations which they fancied to be successively derived from one another.

And they also distinguished between the maker of the world, whom they called the God of the Old Testament, and the God of the New; and between Jesus and Christ; Jesus, according to the doctrine of Cerinthus, as Irenæus tells us, being the man that was born of the virgin; and Christ, or the Messias, being that divine power or spirit which afterwards descended into Jesus, and dwelt in him.

If it were possible, yet it would be to no purpose, to go

go about to reconcile these wild conceits with one another, and to find out for what reason they were invented, unless it were to amuse the people with these *high swelling words of vanity*, and a pretence of *knowledge falsely so called*, as the Apostle speaks, in allusion to the name of Gnosticks, that is to say, *the men of knowledge*; which they proudly assumed to themselves, as if the knowledge of mysteries of a more sublime nature did peculiarly belong to them.

In opposition to all those vain and groundless conceits, St. John, in the beginning of his gospel, chuses to speak of our blessed Saviour, the history of whose life and death he was going to write, by the name or title of *the Word*, a term very famous among those sects; and shews, that this *Word of God*, which was also the title the Jews anciently gave to the Messias, did exist before he assumed a human nature, and even from all eternity; and that to this eternal Word did truly belong all those titles which they kept such a canting stir about, and which they did with so much senseless nicety and subtilty distinguish from one another, as if they had been so many several emanations from the Deity. And he shews, that this *Word of God* was really and truly *the Life*, and *the Light*, and *the Fulness*, and *the Only Begotten of the Father*: v. 4. *In him was life, and the life was the light of men*: and, v. 5. *And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not*; and, v. 6, 7, 8, 9. where the Evangelist, speaking of John the Baptist, says of him, that *he came for a witness, to bear witness of the light*: and that *he was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light*: *and that light was the true light which coming into the world enlightens every man*: and, v. 14. *And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*; and, v. 16. *And of his fulness we all receive*, &c. You see here is a perpetual allusion to the glorious titles which they gave to their Æons, as if they had been so many several deities.

In short, the Evangelist shews, that all this fanciful genealogy of divine emanations, with which the Gnosticks made so great a noise, was mere conceit and imagination; and that all these glorious titles did really

meet in the Messias, who is the Word, and who before his incarnation was from all eternity with God, partaker of his divine and glory.

I have declared this the more fully and particularly, because the knowledge of it seems to me to be the only true key to the interpretation of this discourse of St. John concerning our Saviour, under the name and title of *the Word*. And surely it is a quite wrong way for any man to go about, by the mere strength and subtilty of his reason and wit, though never so great, to interpret an ancient book, without understanding and considering the historical occasion of it, which is the only thing that can give true light to it.

And this was the great and fatal mistake of Socinus, to go to interpret scripture merely by criticizing upon words, and searching into all the senses that they are possibly capable of, till he can find one, though never so forced and foreign, that will save harmless the opinion which he was beforehand resolved to maintain, even against the most natural and obvious sense of the text which he undertakes to interpret; just as if a man should interpret ancient statutes and records by mere critical skill in words, without regard to the true occasion upon which they were made, and without any manner of knowledge and insight into the history of the age in which they were written.

I shall now proceed to the second thing which I proposed to consider, namely,

II. The description here given of the Word by this Evangelist, in his entrance into his history of the gospel: *In the beginning* (says he) *was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

In which passage of the Evangelist four things are said of the Word, which will require a more particular explication.

1. That *he was in the beginning.*
2. That *he was in the beginning with God.*
3. That *he was God.*
4. That *all were made by him.*

1. That *he was in the beginning*; ἐν ἀρχῇ, which is the

the ſame with ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, *from the beginning*, 1 John i. 1. where, ſpeaking of Chriſt by the name of *eternal life*, and of *the word of life*, *That* (ſays he) *which was from the beginning*. Nonnus, the ancient paraphraſt of St. John's goſpel, by way of explication of what is meant by his being *in the beginning*, adds, that he was ἄχρονος, *without time*; that is, before all time: and if ſo, then he was from all eternity. *In the beginning was the Word*; that is, when things began to be made, he was; not then began to be, but then already was, and did exiſt before any thing was made; and conſequently is without beginning, for that which was never made, could have no beginning of its being. And ſo the Jews uſed to deſcribe eternity, *before the world was*, and *before the foundation of the world*; as alſo in ſeveral places of the New Teſtament. And ſo likewiſe Solomon deſcribes the eternity of Wiſdom, Prov. viii. 22. 23. *&c. The Lord* (ſays he) *poſſeſſed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was ſet up from everlaſting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: then I was by him as one brought up with him, rejoicing always before him.* And ſo Juſtin Martyr explains this very expreſſion of St. John, that he was, or had a being before all ages. So likewiſe Athenagoras, a moſt ancient Chriſtian writer: "God, (ſays "he) who is an inviſible mind, had from the begin-"ning the Word in himſelf."

2. That *in the beginning the Word was with God.* And ſo Solomon, when he would expreſs the eternity of Wiſdom, ſays, *it was with God*: and ſo likewiſe the ſon of Sirach ſpeaking of Wiſdom, ſays, it was μετὰ τοῦ θεοῦ, *with God*. And ſo the ancient Jews often called *the Word of God*, "the Word which is before the Lord;" that is, with him, or in his preſence. In like manner the Evangeliſt ſays here, that the *Word was with God*; that is, it was always together with him, partaking of his happineſs and glory. To which our Saviour refers in his prayer, John xvii. 5. *Glorify me with thine own ſelf, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.* And this *being with God* the Evangeliſt oppoſeth to his *appearing* and *being manifeſted* to the world, v. 10. *He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world*

knew

knew him not; that is, he who from all eternity was *with God*, appeared in the world; and when he did so, tho' he had made the world, yet the world would not own him. And this opposition between his *being with God*, and his *being manifested* in the world, the same St. John mentions elsewhere, 1 John i. 2. *We shew unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.*

3. That *he was God.* And so Justin Martyr says of him, That "he was God before the world;" that is, from all eternity. But then the Evangelist adds by way of explication, *The same was in the beginning with God*; that is, though the Word was truly and really God, yet he was not God the Father, who is the fountain of the Deity, but an emanation from him, the only begotten Son of God, from all eternity *with him*; to denote to us, that which is commonly called by divines, and, for any thing I could ever see, properly enough, the distinction of persons in the Deity; at least we know not a fitter word whereby to express that great mystery.

4. That *all things were made by him.* This seems to refer to the description which Moses makes of the creation, where God is represented creating things by his word, Gen. i. 3. *God said, let there be light, and there was light:* and so likewise the Psalmist, Psal. xxxiii. 6. *By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.* And so St. Peter also expresseth the creation of the world, 2 Pet. iii. 5. *By the word of the Lord the heavens were of old, and the earth made out of water.* And in the ancient books of the Chaldeans, and the verses ascribed to Orpheus, the maker of the world is called *the Word*, and *the divine Word.* And so Tertullian tells the Pagans, that by their philosophers the maker of the world was called Λόγος, *the Word*, or *Reason.* And Philo the Jew, following Plato, who himself most probably had it from the Jews, says, that the world was created by the *Word*, whom he calls *the name of God*, and *the image of God*, and *the Son of God*: two of which glorious titles are ascribed to him, together with that of *maker of the world*, by the author of the epistle to the Hebrews: *In these last days* (says he) *God hath spoken to us by his Son, by whom also*

alſo he made the worlds: who is the brightneſs of his glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon. And to the same purpoſe St. Paul, ſpeaking of Chriſt, Coloſ. i 15. 16. 17. calls him *the image of the inviſible God, the firſt-born of every creature*; that is, born before any thing was created; as does evidently follow from the reaſon given in the next words why he called him *the firſt-born of every creature: For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, viſible and inviſible: all things were created by him, and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things ſubſiſt.* From whence it is plain, that by his being *the firſt-born of every creature*, thus much at leaſt is to be underſtood, that he was before all creatures, and therefore he himſelf cannot be a creature, unleſs he could be before himſelf. Nay, the Apoſtle ſays it expreſsly in this very text in which he is called *the firſt-born of every creature*, (or *of the whole creation*) that *he is before all things*; that is, he had a being before there was any created being, he was before all creatures both in duration and in dignity; for ſo muſt he of neceſſity be, if *all things were made by him*; for as the maker is always before the thing which is made, ſo is he alſo better, and of greater dignity.

And yet I muſt acknowledge, that there ſeems to be no ſmall difficulty in the interpretation I have given of this expreſſion in which Chriſt is ſaid by the Apoſtle to be *the firſt-born of every creature*, or of the whole creation; becauſe in ſtrictneſs of ſpeech the firſt-born is of the ſame nature with thoſe in reſpect of whom he is ſaid to be the firſt-born: and if ſo, then he muſt be a creature as well as thoſe in reſpect of whom he is ſaid to be the firſt-born. This is the objection in its full ſtrength, and I do own it to have a very plauſible appearance; and yet I hope, before I have done, to ſatisfy any one that will conſider things impartially, and without prejudice, and will duly attend to the ſcope of the Apoſtle's reaſoning in this text, and compare it with other parallel places of the New Teſtament, that it neither is, nor can be the Apoſtle's meaning, in affirming Chriſt to be *the firſt-born of every creature*, to inſinuate that the Son of God is a creature.

For how can this poſſibly agree with that which follows,

lows, and is given as the reaſon why Chriſt is ſaid to be *the firſt-born of every creature*, namely, becauſe *all things were made by him?* The Apoſtle's words are theſe: *The firſt-born of every creature*, (or *of the whole creation*;) *for by him all things were created*: but now, according to the Socinian interpretation, this would be a reaſon juſt the contrary way: for if *all things were created by him*, then he himſelf is not a creature.

So that the Apoſtle's meaning in this expreſſion muſt either be, that the Son of God, our bleſſed Saviour, was before all creatures, as it is ſaid preſently after, that *he is before all things*; and then the reaſon which is added will be very proper and pertinent, *He is before all things*, becauſe *all things were created by him*. In which ſenſe it is very probable, that the Son of God elſewhere calls himſelf *the beginning of the creation of God*, Rev. iii. 14. meaning by it, as the philoſophers moſt frequently uſe the word ἀρχὴ, the *principle* or efficient cauſe of the creation: and ſo we find the ſame word which our tranſlation renders *the beginning*, uſed together with the word *firſt-born*, as if they were of the ſame importance, Coloſ. i. 18. *the beginning and firſt-born from the dead*; that is, the principle and efficient cauſe of the reſurrection of the dead.

Or elſe, which ſeems to me to be the moſt probable, and indeed the true meaning of the expreſſion, by this title of *the firſt-born of every creature*, the Apoſtle means, that he was lord and heir of the creation: for the firſt-born is natural heir; and Juſtinian tells us, that *heir* did anciently ſignify *lord*: and therefore the ſcriptures uſe theſe terms promiſcuouſly, and as if they were equivalent. For whereas St. Peter ſays of Jeſus Chriſt, that *he is Lord of all*, Acts x. 36. St. Pauls calls him *heir of all things*, Rom. iv. 13. and then the reaſon given by the Apoſtle why he calls him *the firſt-born of every creature*, will be very fit and proper, *becauſe all things were created by him*. For well may he be ſaid to be lord and heir of the creation, who *made all things that were made, and without whom was not any thing made that was made.*

And this will yet appear much more evident, if we conſider, that the Apoſtle to the Hebrews (who, by ſeveral of the ancients, was thought to be St. Paul, where he gives

gives to Chriſt ſome of the very ſame titles which St. Paul in his epiſtle to the Coloſſians had done, calling him *the image of God*, and *the maker of the world)* does, inſtead of the title of *the firſt-born of every creature*, call him *the heir of all things*: and then adds, as the reaſon of this title, that *by him God made the worlds*, *God* (ſays he) *hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath conſtituted heir of all things: who being the brightneſs of his glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon, and upholding all things by the word of his power*, &c. Which is exactly parallel with that paſſage of St. Paul to the Coloſſians, where Chriſt is called *the image of the inviſible God*; and where it is likewiſe ſaid of him, that *he made all things*, and that *by him all things do ſubſiſt*. Which the Apoſtle to the Hebrews, in different words, but to the very ſame ſenſe, expreſſeth by his *upholding all things by the word of his power*; that is, by the ſame powerful word by which all things at firſt were made: but then, inſtead of calling him *the firſt-born of every creature*, becauſe *all things were made by him*, he calls him *the heir of all things, by whom God alſo made the worlds*.

And indeed that expreſſion of *the firſt-born of every creature* cannot admit of any other ſenſe which will agree ſo well with the reaſon that follows, as the ſenſe which I have mentioned; namely, that he is therefore *heir and lord of the whole creation*, becauſe *all creatures were made by him*; which exactly anſwers thoſe words of the Apoſtle to the Hebrews, *whom he hath conſtituted heir of all things, by whom alſo he made the worlds*.

And now I appeal to any ſober and conſiderate man, whether the interpretation which I have given of that expreſſion of *the firſt-born of every creature*, be not much more agreeable both to the tenor of the ſcripture, and to the plain ſcope and deſign of the Apoſtle's argument and reaſoning in that text?

I have inſiſted the longer upon this, becauſe it is the great text upon which the Arians lay the main ſtrength and ſtreſs of their opinion, that the Son of God is a creature, becauſe he is ſaid by the Apoſtle to be *the firſt-born of every creature*; by which expreſſion, if no more be meant than that he is heir and lord of the whole creation, which I have ſhewed to be very agreeable both to

the use of the word *first-born* among the Hebrews, and likewise to the description given of Christ in that parallel text which I cited out of the epistle to the Hebrews, then this expression of *the first-born of every creature* is nothing at all to the purpose either of the Arians or the Socinians, to prove the Son of God to be a creature: besides that the interpretation which I have given of it makes the Apostle's sense much more current and easy; for then the text will run thus, who *is the image of the invisible God, heir and lord of the whole creation; for by him all things were made.*

So that, in these four expressions of the evangelist, which I have explained, there are these four things distinctly affirmed of the Word.

1. That *he was in the beginning*; that is, that he already was, and did exist, when things began to be created. He was before any thing was made, and consequently is without any beginning of time; for that which was never made, could have no beginning of its being.

2. That in that state of his existence before the creation of the world, he was partaker of the divine glory and happiness. And this I have shewed to be the meaning of that expression, *And the Word was with God*: for thus our blessed Saviour does explain his *being with God* before the world was, *And now, O Father, glorify me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.*

3. That *he was God: And the Word was God*; not God the Father, who is the principle and fountain of the Deity. To prevent that mistake, after he had said that *the Word was God*, he immediately adds in the next verse, *The same was in the beginning with God.* He was God, by participation of the divine nature and happiness together with the Father, and by way of derivation from him, as the light is from the sun; which is the common illustration which the ancient fathers of the Christian church gives us of this mystery; and is perhaps the best and fittest that can be given of it. For among finite beings, it is not to be expected, because not possible, to find any exact resemblance of that which is infinite, and consequently incomprehensible; because whatever

whatever is infinite, is for that reaſon incomprehenſible by a finite underſtanding, which is too ſhort and ſhallow to meaſure that which is infinite; and whoever attempts it, will ſoon find himſelf out of his depth.

4. That *all things were made by him*: which could not have been more emphatically expreſſed, than it is here by the Evangeliſt, after the manner of the Hebrews; who, when they would ſay a thing with the greateſt force and certainty, are wont to expreſs it both affirmatively and negatively; as, *He ſhall live, and not die*; that is, he ſhall moſt aſſuredly live: So here, *All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made*; that is, he made all creatures without exception; and conſequently he himſelf is not a creature, becauſe it is evidently impoſſible that any thing ſhould ever make itſelf; but then, if he be, and yet was never made, it is certainly true, that he always was, even from all eternity.

All theſe aſſertions are plainly and expreſsly contained in this deſcription which the Evangeliſt St. John here makes of the Word: and this according to the interpretation of theſe expreſſions by the unanimous conſent of the moſt ancient writers of the Chriſtian church; who, ſome of them, had the advantage of receiving it from the immediate diſciples of St. John: which ſurely is no ſmall prejudice againſt any newly invented and contrary interpretation; as I ſhall hereafter more fully ſhew, when I come to conſider the ſtrange and extravagant interpretation which the Socinians make of this paſſage of St. John; which is plain enough of itſelf, if they, under a pretence of explaining and making it more clear, had not diſturbed and darkened it.

Now, from this deſcription which the Evangeliſt here gives of the Word, and which I have ſo largely explained in the foregoing diſcourſe, theſe three corollaries or concluſions do neceſſarily follow.

1. That the Word here deſcribed by St. John is not a creature. This concluſion is directly againſt the Arians, who affirmed that the Son of God was a creature. They grant indeed that he is the firſt of all the creatures, both in dignity and duration; for ſo they underſtand that expreſſion of the Apoſtle, wherein he is called *the firſt-born*

of every creature. But this I have endeavoured already to shew not to be the meaning of that expression.

They grant him indeed to have been God's agent or instrument in the creation of the world, and that all other creatures besides himself were made by him; but still they contend, that he is a creature, and was made. Now, this cannot possibly consist with what St. John says of him, that *he was in the beginning*, that is, as hath been already shewn, before any thing was made; and likewise, because he is said to have *made all things, and* that *without him was not any thing made that was made:* and therefore he himself, who made all things, is necessarily excepted out of the condition or rank of a creature; as the Apostle reasons in another case: *He hath put all things under his feet: but when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest, that he is excepted who did put all things under him.* In like manner, if *by him all things were made, and without him was not any thing made that was made*, then either he was not made, or he must make himself; which involves in it a plain contradiction.

2. That this Word was from all eternity: for if *he was in the beginning*, that is, before any thing was made, he must of necessity always have been; because whatever is, must either have been sometime made, or must always have been; for that which was not, and afterwards is, must be made. And this will likewise follow from his being said to be God, and that in the most strict and proper sense, which doth necessarily imply his eternity; because God cannot begin to be, but must of necessity always have been.

3. From both these, it will undeniably follow, that he had an existence before his incarnation, and his being born of the blessed virgin: for if *he was in the beginning*, that is, from all eternity, which I have shewn to be the meaning of that expression, then certainly he was before his being born of the blessed virgin. And this likewise is implied in the proposition in the text, *And the Word was made flesh, viz.* that Word which the Evangelist had before so gloriously described; that Word which *was in the beginning, and was with God, and was God*, and *by whom all things were made:* I say, that Word was

was incarnate, and aſſumed a human nature; and therefore muſt neceſſarily exiſt and have a being before he could aſſume humanity into an union with his divinity.

And this propoſition is directly levelled againſt the Socinians, who affirm our bleſſed Saviour to be a mere man, and that he had no exiſtence before he was born of the virgin Mary his mother; which aſſertion of theirs doth perfectly contradict all the former concluſions which have been drawn from the deſcription here given by St. John of the Word; and their interpretation of this paſſage of St. John, applying it to the beginning of the publication of the goſpel, and to the new creation or reformation of the world by Jeſus Chriſt, doth likewiſe contradict the interpretation of this paſſage conſtantly received, not only by the ancient fathers, but even by the general conſent of all Chriſtians for fifteen hundred years together; as I ſhall hereafter plainly ſhew; for, to eſtabliſh this their opinion, that our bleſſed Saviour was a mere man, and had no exiſtence before his birth, they are forced to interpret this whole paſſage in the beginning of St. John's goſpel quite to another ſenſe, never mentioned, nor, I believe, thought of by any Chriſtian writer whatſoever before Socinus. And it is not eaſy to imagine how any opinion can be loaded with a greater and heavier prejudice than this is.

And this I ſhould now take into conſideration, and ſhew, beſides the novelty of this interpretation, and the great violence and unreaſonableneſs of it, the utter inconſiſtency of it with other plain texts of the New Teſtament.

But this is wholly matter of controverſy, and will require a large diſcourſe by itſelf: I ſhall therefore wave the further proſecution of it at preſent, and apply myſelf to that which is more practical, and proper for the occaſion of this ſeaſon. So that at preſent I have done with the firſt thing contained in the firſt part of the text, *viz.* the perſon here ſpoken of, who is ſaid to be incarnate, namely, the Word; it was he that *was made fleſh*.

I ſhould then have proceeded to the ſecond thing which I propoſed to conſider, *viz.* the myſtery itſelf,

or the nature of this incarnation, so far as the scripture hath revealed and declared it to us, namely, by assuming our nature in such a manner as that the divinity became united to a human soul and body. But this I have already endeavoured in some measure to explain, and shall do it more fully in some of the following discourses upon this text. I shall now only make a short and useful reflexion upon it with relation to the solemnity of this time.

And it shall be to stir us up to a thankful acknowledgment of the great love of God to mankind, in the mystery of our redemption by the incarnation of the Word, the only begotten Son of God; that he should deign to have such a regard to us in our low condition, and to take our case so much to heart, as to think of redeeming and saving mankind from that depth of misery into which we had plunged ourselves, and to do this in so wonderful and astonishing a manner; that God should employ his eternal and only begotten Son, who had been with him from all eternity, partaker of his happiness and glory, and was God of God, to save the sons of men by so infinite and amazing a condescension; that God should vouchsafe to become man, to reconcile man to God; that he should come down from heaven to earth, to raise us from earth to heaven; that he should assume our vile, and frail, and mortal nature, that he might clothe us with glory, and honour, and immortality; that he should suffer death to save us from hell, and shed his blood to purchase eternal redemption for us.

For certainly the greater the person is that was employed in this merciful design, so much the greater is the condescension, and the love and goodness expressed in it so much the more admirable; that the Son of God should stoop from the height of glory and happiness, to the lowest degree of abasement, and to the very depth of misery, for our sakes, who were so mean and inconsiderable, so guilty and obnoxious to the severity of his justice, so altogether unworthy of his grace and favour, and so very unwilling to receive it when it was so freely offered to us: for, as the Evangelist here tells us, *He came to his own, but his own received him not:* to his own creatures, and they did not own and acknowledge their

their maker; to his own nation and kindred, and they deſpiſed him, and eſteemed him not. Lord! what is man, that God ſhould be ſo mindful of him? or the ſon of man, that the Son of God ſhould come down from heaven to viſit him, in ſo much humility and condeſcenſion, and with ſo much kindneſs and compaſſion?

Bleſſed God and Saviour of mankind, what ſhall we render to thee for ſuch mighty love, for ſuch ineſtimable benefits as thou haſt purchaſed for us, and art ready to confer upon us? What ſhall we ſay to thee, O thou preſerver and lover of ſouls, ſo often as we approach thy holy table, there to commemorate this mighty love of thine to us, and to partake of thoſe invaluable bleſſings which, by thy precious blood-ſhedding, thou haſt obtained for us? So often as we there remember, that thou waſt pleaſed to aſſume our mortal nature, on purpoſe to live amongſt us for our inſtruction, and for our example, and to lay down thy life for the redemption of our ſouls, and for the expiation of our ſins; and to *take part of fleſh and blood*, that thou mighteſt ſhed it for our ſakes; what affections ſhould theſe thoughts raiſe in us? what vows and reſolutions ſhould they engage us in, of perpetual love, and gratitude, and obedience to thee the moſt gracious and moſt glorious Redeemer of mankind?

And with what religious ſolemnity ſhould we, more eſpecially at this time, celebrate the incarnation and birth of the Son of God, by giving praiſe and *glory to God in the higheſt*, and by all poſſible demonſtration of charity and *good-will to men?* And as he was pleaſed to aſſume our nature, ſo ſhould we, eſpecially at this ſeaſon, *put on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt*; that is, ſincerely embrace and practiſe his religion, *making no proviſion for the fleſh to fulfil the luſts thereof.* And now that the *ſun of righteouſneſs* is riſen upon the world, we ſhould *walk as children of the light, and demean ourſelves decently as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenneſs, not in chambering and wantonneſs, not in ſtrife and envy*; and ſhould be very careful not to abuſe ourſelves by ſin and ſenſuality, upon this very conſideration, that the Son hath put ſuch an honour and dignity upon us. We ſhould reverence that nature which God did not diſdain to aſſume, and

to inhabit here on earth, and in which he now gloriously reigns in heaven, at the right hand of his Father. To him be glory for ever and ever. *Amen.*

SERMON XLIV.

Concerning the divinity of our blessed Saviour.

Preached in the church of St. Lawrence-Jewry, January 6. 1679.

JOHN i. 14.

The Word was made flesh.

The second sermon on this text.

I Proceed now to prosecute the third corollary or conclusion which does necessarily follow from the description which St. John in the beginning of his gospel gives of the Word, and which I have so largely explained in the foregoing discourse. And it was this:

That the Word here described by the Evangelist, had an existence before his incarnation, and his being born of the blessed virgin.

This assertion, I told you, is levelled directly against the Socinians, who affirm our blessed Saviour to be a mere man, and deny that he had any existence before he was born of the virgin Mary his mother. Which position of theirs does perfectly contradict all the former conclusions which have been so evidently drawn from the description here given of the Word: and not only so, but hath forced them to interpret this whole passage in the beginning of St. John's gospel in a very different sense from that which was constantly received, not only by the ancient fathers, but by the general consent of all Christians 1500 years together. For to establish this their opinion of our Saviour's being a mere man, and having no existence before his birth, they have found it necessary

neceſſary to expound this whole paſſage quite to another ſenſe, and ſuch as, by their own confeſſion, was never mentioned, nor I believe thought of, by any Chriſtian writer whatſoever before Socinus.

For this reaſon, I ſhall very particularly conſider the interpretation which Socinus gives of this paſſage of St. John; and, beſides the novelty of it, which they themſelves acknowledge, I make no doubt very plainly to manifeſt the great violence and unreaſonableneſs, and likewiſe the inconſiſtency of it with other plain texts of the New Teſtament.

It is very evident what it was that forced Socinus to ſo ſtrained and violent an interpretation of this paſſage of the Evangeliſt; namely, that he plainly ſaw how much the obvious, and natural, and generally received interpretation of this paſſage, in all ages of the Chriſtian church down to his time, ſtood in the way of his opinion, of Chriſt's being a mere man; which he was ſo fond of, and muſt of neceſſity have quitted, unleſs he would either have denied the divine authority of St. John's goſpel, or elſe could ſupplant the common interpretation of this paſſage, by putting a quite different ſenſe upon it. Which ſenſe he could find no way to ſupport, without ſuch pitiful and wretched ſhifts, ſuch precarious and arbitrary ſuppoſitions, as a man of ſo ſharp a reaſon and judgment as Socinus, could not, I thought, have ever been driven to. But neceſſity hath no laws, either of reaſon or modeſty; and he who is reſolved to maintain an opinion which he hath once taken up, muſt ſtick at nothing, but muſt break through all difficulties that ſtand in his way. And ſo the Socinians have here done; as will, I hope, manifeſtly appear in the following diſcourſe.

They grant, that by the *Word* is here meant Chriſt, by whom God ſpake and declared his mind and will to the world; which they make to be the whole reaſon of that name or title of *the Word* which is here given him, and not becauſe by him God made the world: for the word by which God made the world, they tell us, was nothing but the powerful command of God, and not a perſon who was deſigned to be the Meſſias. And becauſe, as I have ſhewed before, the ancient Jews do

make

make frequent mention of this title of *the Word of God*, by whom, they say, God made the world, and do likewise apply this title to the Messias; therefore, to avoid this, Schlictingius says, that the Chaldee paraphrasts, Jonathan and Onkelos, do sometimes put *the Word of God* for *God*, by a metonymy of the effect for the cause; but then he confidently denies, that they do any where distinguish the *Word* of God from the *person* of God, as they acknowledge that St. John here does; nor do they, says he, understand, by *the Word of God*, the *Messias*, but, on the contrary, do oppose *the Word of God* to the *Messias*. All which is most evidently confuted by that passage which I cited before out of the Targum of Jonathan, who renders those words concerning the Messias, *The Lord said unto my Lord*, &c. thus, *The Lord said unto his Word, Sit thou on my right hand*, &c. where you see both that *the Word of God* is plainly distinguished from God, and that it is the title given to the Messias, which are the two things which Schlictingius doth so confidently deny.

This then being agreed on all hands, that by *the Word*, St. John means the *Messias*, I shall, in the next place, shew, by what strained and forced arts of interpretation the Socinians endeavour to avoid the plain and necessary consequence from this passage of St. John; namely, that the Word had an existence before he was *made flesh*, and born of the blessed virgin his mother.

This then, in short, is the interpretation which they give of this passage; than which, I think, nothing can be more unnatural and violent.

In the beginning: This they will by no means have to refer to the creation of the world, but to the beginning of the gospel; that is, when the gospel first began to be published, then was Christ, and not before. *And he was with God*; that is, says Socinus, Christ, as he was the word of God, that is, the gospel of Christ, which was afterwards by him revealed to the world, was first only known to God. But all this being somewhat hard, first to understand by *the beginning*, not the beginning of the world, but of the gospel; and then by *the Word which was with God*, to understand the gospel, which, before it was revealed, was only known to God; they

have

have upon ſecond thoughts found out another meaning of theſe words, *And the Word was with God*; that is, ſaith Schlictingius, Chriſt was taken up by God into heaven, and there inſtructed in the mind and will of God, and from thence ſent down into the world again, to declare it to mankind.

And the Word was God; that is, ſay they, Chriſt had the honour and title of *God* conferred upon him, as magiſtrates alſo have, who, in the ſcripture, are called *gods*: He *was God*, not by nature, but by office, and by divine conſtitution and appointment.

All things were made by him: This they will need have to be meant of the renovation and reformation of the world by Jeſus Chriſt, which is ſeveral times in ſcripture called a *new creation*.

This, in ſhort, is the ſum of their interpretation of this paſſage; which I ſhall now examine; and to which I ſhall oppoſe three things, as ſo many invincible prejudices againſt it.

1. That not only all the ancient fathers of the Chriſtian church, but, ſo far as I can find, all interpreters whatſoever for fifteen hundred years together, did underſtand this paſſage of St. John in a quite different ſenſe: namely, of the creation of the material, and not of the renovation of the moral world. And I add further, that the generality of Chriſtians did ſo underſtand this paſſage, as to collect from it, as an undoubted point of Chriſtianity, that the Word had a real exiſtence before he was born of the bleſſed virgin.

And thus not only the orthodox Chriſtians, but even the Arians, and Amelius the Platoniſt, who was a more indifferent judge than either of them, did underſtand this paſſage of St. John; without any thought of this invention, that he ſpake not of the old, but of the new creation of the world by Jeſus Chriſt, and the reformation of mankind by the preaching of the goſpel: which, I dare ſay, no indifferent reader of St. John, that had not been prepoſſeſſed and biaſſed by ſome violent prejudice, would ever have thought of.

And ſurely it ought to be very conſiderable in this caſe, that the moſt ancient Chriſtian writers, Ignatius, Juſtin Martyr, Athenagoras, Irenæus, Tertullian, and

even

even Origen himself, who is called the father of interpreters, are most express and positive in this matter. For Ignatius was the scholar of Polycarp, who was a disciple of St. John; and Justin Martyr lived in the next age to that of the Apostles; and Origen was a man of infinite learning and reading, and in his comments upon scripture seems to have considered all the interpretations of those that were before him; so that, if this, which Socinus is so confident is the true sense of St. John, had been any where extant, he would not probably have omitted it; nay, rather would certainly have mentioned it, if for no other reason, yet for the surprising novelty and strangeness of it, with which he was apt to be overmuch delighted.

So that, if this interpretation of Socinus be true, here are two things very wonderful, and almost incredible: First, that those who lived so very near St. John's time, and were most likely to know his meaning, as Ignatius, Justin Martyr, *&c.* should so widely mistake it: And then, that the whole Christian world should for so many ages together be deceived in the ground and foundation of so important an article of faith, if it were true; or, if it were not, should be led into so gross and dangerous an error as this must needs be, if Christ had no real existence before he was born into the world: and which would be necessarily consequent upon this, that no man did understand this passage of St. John aright before Socinus. This very consideration alone, if there were no other, were sufficient to stagger any prudent man's belief of this interpretation.

And as to the novelty of it, Socinus himself makes no difficulty to own it; nay he seems rather to rejoice and to applaud himself in it. Unhappy man! that was so wedded to his own opinion, that no objection, no difficulty could divorce him from it.

And for this I refer myself to his preface to his explication of this first chapter of St. John's gospel; where you shall find these words concerning the passage now in controversy, *Quorum verus sensus omnes prorsus qui quidem extarent explanatores latuisse videtur:* "The "true sense of which words (says he) seems to have "been hid from all the expositors that ever were ex-

"tant."

" tant." And upon theſe words, v. 10. *He was in the world, and the world was made by him,* he hath this expreſſion, *Quid autem hoc loco ſibi velit Johannes, à nemine quod ſciam adhuc rectè expoſitum fuit:* " But what " St. John means in this place, was never yet, that " I know of, by any rightly explained." And Schlictingius after him, with more confidence, but much leſs decency, tells us, that concerning the meaning of thoſe expreſſions, *in the beginning,* and of thoſe which follow concerning the Word, the ancient interpreters did *ab Apoſtoli mente delirare;* went " ſo far from the Apoſtle's " meaning, as if they had raved and been out of their " wits." Which is ſo extravagantly ſaid, and with ſo much contempt of thoſe great and venerable names, who were the chief propagators of Chriſtianity in the world, and to whom all ages do ſo juſtly pay a reverence, that nothing can be ſaid in excuſe of him, but only that it is not uſual with him to fall into ſuch raſh and rude expreſſions. But the man was really pinched by ſo plain and preſſing a text; and where reaſon is weak and blunt, paſſion muſt be whetted, the only weapon that is left when reaſon fails: and I always take it for granted, that no man is ever angry with his adverſary, but for want of a better argument to ſupport his cauſe.

And yet, to do right to the writers on that ſide, I muſt own, that generally they are a pattern of the fair way of diſputing, and of debating matters of religion, without heat, and unſeemly reflections upon their adverſaries; in the number of whom I did not expect that the primitive fathers of the Chriſtian church would have been reckoned by them. They generally argue matters with that temper and gravity, and with that freedom from paſſion and tranſport, which becomes a ſerious and weighty argument: and for the moſt part they reaſon cloſely and clearly, with extraordinary guard and caution; with great dexterity and decency, and yet with ſmartneſs and ſubtilty enough; with a very gentle heat, and few hard words: virtues to be praiſed where-ever they are found, yea even in an enemy, and very worthy our imitation. In a word, they are the ſtrongeſt managers of a weak cauſe, and which is ill founded at the bottom,

tom, that perhaps ever yet meddled with controverſy; inſomuch that ſome of the Proteſtants, and the generality of the Popiſh writers, and even of the Jeſuits themſelves, who pretend to all the reaſon and ſubtilty in the world, are in compariſon of them but mere ſcolds and bunglers. Upon the whole matter, they have but this one great defect, that they want a good cauſe and truth on their ſide: which if they had, they have reaſon, and wit, and temper enough to defend it.

But to return to the buſineſs: That which I urge them withal, and that from their own confeſſion, is this, That this interpretation of theirs is perfectly new, and unknown to the whole Chriſtian world before Socinus; and for that reaſon, in my opinion, not to bragged of; becauſe it is in effect to ſay, that the Chriſtian religion, in a point pretended on both ſides to be of the greateſt moment, was never rightly underſtood by any ſince the Apoſtles days, for fifteen hundred years together; and, which makes the matter yet worſe, that the religion which was particularly deſigned to overthrow Polytheiſm, and the belief of more gods, hath, according to them, been ſo ill taught and underſtood by Chriſtians, for ſo many ages together, and almoſt from the very beginning of Chriſtianity, as does neceſſarily infer a plurality of gods: an inconvenience ſo great, as no cauſe, how plauſible ſoever it may otherwiſe appear, is able to ſtand under, and to ſuſtain the weight of it.

For this the Socinians object to us at every turn, as the unavoidable conſequence of our interpretation of this paſſage of St. John, and of all other texts of ſcripture produced by us to the ſame purpoſe, notwithſtanding that this interpretation hath obtained in the Chriſtian church for ſo many ages. Now, whoſoever can believe, that the Chriſtian religion hath done the work for which it was principally deſigned, ſo ineffectually, muſt have very little reverence for it; nay, it muſt be a marvellous civility in him if he believe it all. All that can be ſaid in this caſe is, that it pleaſes God many times to permit men to hold very inconſiſtent things, and which do in truth, though they themſelves diſcern it not, moſt effectually overthrow one another.

2. Another mighty prejudice againſt this interpretation

tion is this, that, according to this rate of liberty in interpreting ſcripture, it will ſignify very little or nothing when any perſon or party is concerned to oppoſe any doctrine contained in it; and the plaineſt texts for any article of faith, how fundamental and neceſſary ſoever, may, by the ſame arts and ways of interpretation, be eluded, and rendered utterly ineffectual for the eſtabliſhing of it. For example; if any man had a mind to call in queſtion that article of the creed concerning the creation of the world, why might he not, according to Socinus's way of interpreting St. John, underſtand the firſt chapter of Geneſis, concerning the beginning of the Moſaical diſpenſation, and interpret the creation of the heaven and the earth, to be the inſtitution of the Jewiſh polity and religion, as by the *new heavens* and the *new earth*, they pretend is to be underſtood the new ſtate of things under the goſpel: and why may not the chaos ſignify that ſtate of darkneſs and ignorance in which the world was before the giving of the law by Moſes? and ſo on; as a very learned divine of our own (Dr. Stillingfleet) hath ingeniouſly ſhewn more at large.

There is no end of wit and fancy, which can turn any thing any way; and can make whatever they pleaſe to be the meaning of any book, though never ſo contrary to the plain deſign of it, and to that ſenſe which, at the firſt hearing and reading of it, is obvious to every man of common ſenſe.

And this, in my opinion, Socinus hath done in the caſe now before us, by impoſing a new, and odd, and violent ſenſe upon this paſſage of St. John, directly contrary to what any man would imagine to be the plain and obvious meaning of it, and contrary likeways to the ſenſe of the Chriſtian church in all ages down to his time; who yet had as great or greater advantages of underſtanding St. John aright, and as much integrity, as any man can now modeſtly pretend to: and all this only to ſerve and ſupport an opinion which he had entertained before, and therefore was reſolved, one way or other, to bring the ſcripture to comply with it; and if he could not have done it, it is greatly to be feared that he would at laſt have called in queſtion the divine authority of St. John's goſpel, rather than have quitted his opinion.

And, to speak freely, I must needs say, that it seems to me a much fairer way, to reject the divine authority of a book, than to use it so disingenuously, and to wrest the plain expressions of it with so much straining and violence from their most natural and obvious sense; for no doctrine whatsoever can have any certain foundation in any book, if this liberty be once admitted, without regard to the plain scope and occasion of it, to play upon the words and phrases, with all the arts of criticism, and with all the variety of allegory, which a brisk and lively imagination can devise; which I am so far from admiring in the expounding of the Holy Scriptures, that I am always jealous of an over-laboured and far-fetched interpretation of any author whatsoever.

I do readily grant, that the Socinian writers have managed the cause of the reformation, against the innovations and corruptions of the church of Rome, both in doctrine and practice, with great acuteness and advantage in many respects. But I am sorry to have cause to say, that they have likeways put into their hands better and sharper weapons than ever they had before, for the weakening and undermining of the authority of the holy scriptures; which Socinus indeed hath in the general strongly asserted, had he not, by a dangerous liberty of imposing a foreign and forced sense upon particular texts, brought the whole into uncertainty.

3. Which is as considerable a prejudice against this new interpretation of this passage of St. John as either of the former, I shall endeavour to shew, that this point, of the existence of the Word before his incarnation, does not rely only upon this single passage of St. John, but is likewise confirmed by many other texts of the New Testament, conspiring in the same sense, and utterly incapable of the interpretation which Socinus gives of it.

I find he would be glad to have it taken for granted, that this is the only text in the New Testament to this purpose; and therefore he says very cunningly, that this doctrine of the existence of the Son of God, before his incarnation, is too great a doctrine to be established upon one single text. And this is something, if it were true, that there is no other text in the New Testament that does plainly deliver the same sense; and yet this were

not

not sufficient to bring in question the doctrine delivered in this passage of St. John.

That *God is a spirit*, will, I hope, be acknowledged to be a very weighty and fundamental point of religion; and yet I am very much mistaken if there be any more than one text in the whole bible that says so; and that text is only in St. John's gospel. I know it may be said, that, from the light of natural reason, it may be sufficiently proved that God is a spirit. But surely Socinus of all men cannot say this with a good grace; because he denies that the existence of God can be known by natural light, without divine revelation: and if it cannot be known by natural light that there is a God, much less can it be known by natural light what God is, whether a spirit or a body.

And yet, after all, it is very far from being true, that there is but one text to this purpose, which yet he thought fit to insinuate by way of excuse for the novelty and boldness of his interpretation; of which, any one that reads him may see that he was sufficiently conscious to himself; and therefore was so wise as to endeavour, by this sly insinuation, to provide and lay in against it, I have likeways another reason, which very much inclines me to believe that Socinus was the first author of this interpretation; because it seems to me next to impossible, that a man of so good an understanding as he was, could have ever been so fond of so ill-favoured a child, if it had not been his own. And yet I do not at all wonder that his followers came into it so readily, since they had him in so great a veneration; it being natural to all sects to admire their master; besides, that I doubt not but they were very glad to have so great an authority, as they thought him to be, to vouch for an interpretation, which was so seasonably devised for the relief of their cause, in so much danger to be overthrown by a text that was so plain and full against them.

And how little ground there is for this insinuation, that this is the only text in the New Testament to this purpose, I shall now show from a multitude of other texts to the same sense and purpose with this passage of St. John. And I shall rank them under two heads.

1. Those which expressly assert the Son of God to

have been, and to have been in heaven with God, and partaker with him in his glory, before his incarnation and appearance in the world.

2. Thoſe which affirm that the world, and all creatures whatſoever were made by him.

1. Thoſe texts which expreſsly aſſert the Son of God to have been, and to have been in heaven with God, and partaker with him in his glory, before his incarnation and appearance in the world.

No man hath aſcended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, the Son of man which is in heaven, John iii. 13. where the ſon is ſaid to have *came down from heaven,* in reſpect of the union of his divinity with human nature, and his ſpecial reſidence in it here below; and yet he is ſaid ſo have *come down from heaven,* as ſtill *to be in heaven: He that came down from heaven, the Son of man which is in heaven*; that is, in reſpect of his divinity, by which he is every way preſent. And *he that came down from heaven* is here called *the Son of man,* by the ſame figure that his blood is elſewhere called *the blood of God,* Acts xx. 28. the Apoſtle aſcribing that to one nature which is proper to the other. This we take to be the moſt natural and eaſy ſenſe of this text, and moſt agreeable to the tenor of the New Teſtament.

Again, *What and if ye ſhall ſee the Son of man aſcend up where he was before?* John vi. 62. So that, if he really *aſcended up to heaven* after his reſurrection, he was really there before his incarnation.

Before Abraham was, (ſays our bleſſed Saviour) *I am,* John viii. 58. the obvious ſenſe of which words is, that he had a real exiſtence before Abraham was actually in being.

Again, it is ſaid, John xiii. 3. that *Jeſus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God,* &c.

And again, John xvi. 27, 28. *For the Father himſelf loveth you, becauſe ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.* This was ſo very plain, that his diſciples, who were ſlow enough of apprehenſion in other things, did underſtand this ſo well, that, upon this declaration

claration of his, they were convinced of his omniscience, which is an incommunicable property of the divinity: for so it immediately follows, v. 29, 30. *His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no parable. Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou comest forth from God.* So that either this which I have all along declared must be the meaning of our Saviour's words, or else his disciples were grossly mistaken, and did not understand him at all; and if so, then surely our Saviour, before he had proceeded any further, would have corrected their mistake, and have set them right in this matter. But so far is he from doing that, that he allows them to have understood him aright: for thus it follows, v. 31. *Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe?* as if he had said, I am glad that you are at last convinced, and do believe that *I came from God*, and must return to him; and that *I know all things*, which none but God can do. Is it now possible for any man to read this passage, and yet not to be convinced that the disciples understood our Saviour to speak literally? But if his meaning was, as the Socinians would make us believe, then the disciples did perfectly mistake his words; the contrary whereof is, I think, very plain and evident, beyond all contradiction.

Again, John xvii. 5. *And now, O Father, glorify me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.* This surely is not spoken of his being with God after his incarnation, and before his entrance upon his public ministry: they have not, I think, the face to understand this expression, *before the world was*, of the new creation; but do endeavour to avoid it another way, which I shall consider by and by.

And a little after, v. 8. *I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.*

Again, 1 John i. 1, 2. *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life; for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that*

eternal life (for so he calls the Son of God) *which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.*

And that he was not only with God before he assumed human nature, but also was really God, St. Paul tells us, Phil. ii. 5, 6, 7, 8. *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who being in the form of God, οὐχ' ἁρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο, did not arrogate to himself to be equal with God*; that is, he made no ostentation of his divinity; for this I take to be the true meaning of that phrase, both because it is so used by Plutarch, and because it makes the sense much more easy and current, thus: *Who being in the form of God, did not assume an equality with God*; that is, he did not appear in the glory of his divinity, which was hid under a veil of human flesh and infirmity: *but emptied himself, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man,* (or in the habit of a man) *he became obedient unto death,* &c. So that if his *being made in the likeness and fashion of a man* does signify, that he was really man by his incarnation; then surely his *being in the form of God,* when *he took upon him the fashion and likeness of man,* and *the form of a servant* or slave, must, in all reason, signify, that he was really God before he became man. For which reason the same Apostle did not doubt to say, that *God was manifested in the flesh,* 1 Tim. iii. 16.

And now I hope I have made it fully appear, that the beginning of St. John's gospel is not the single and only text upon which we ground this great doctrine, as Socinus calls it, and as we really esteem it to be; for you see that I have produced a great many more: to avoid the dint and force whereof, the Socinians do chiefly make use of these two answers.

1*st*, To those texts which say, that *he was in heaven,* and *came down from heaven,* they give this answer, That our Saviour, some time before his entrance upon his public ministry, they cannot agree precisely when, was taken up into heaven, and then and there had the will of God revealed to him, and was sent down from heaven again to make it known to the world.

This is so very arbitrary and precarious a supposition, that I must confess myself not a little out of countenance

for

for them, that men of ſo much wit and reaſon ſhould ever be put to ſo ſorry and pitiful a ſhift. For can any man imagine, that in ſo exact a hiſtory of our Saviour's life, written by ſeveral perſons, the relation of ſo important a matter as this, and of the circumſtances of it, ſhould be wholly omitted? That we ſhould have a particular account of his being carried into Egypt in his infancy, and of the time when he was brought back from thence; of his diſputing in the temple with the Jewiſh doctors, and putting them to ſilence, when he was but twelve years of age; a punctual relation of his being baptiſed by John; and how after that *he was led by the Spirit into the wilderneſs to be tempted of the devil*, and was carried by that evil ſpirit from one place to another: but not one word of his being taken up by God into heaven, and of his coming down again from thence; not the leaſt intimation given either of time, or any other circumſtance of ſo memorable a thing, upon which, according to the Socinians, the authority of his miſſion, and the divinity of his doctrine, did ſo much depend: when ſo many things, of ſo much leſs moment, are ſo minutely and exactly reported; what can be the reaſon of this deep ſilence in all the Evangeliſts concerning this matter? But above all, it is to be wondered, that St. John, who wrote his goſpel laſt, and, as Euſebius tells us, on purpoſe to ſupply the omiſſions of the other Evangeliſts, ſhould give no account of this thing; and yet, as the Socinians ſuppoſe, ſhould ſo often take it for granted, and refer to it; as when it is ſaid, that *he came forth from God*, and was *ſent from God*, and *came down from heaven*, beſides ſeveral other expreſſions to this purpoſe.

Who can believe this? And can it then be reaſonable to ſuppoſe ſuch a thing, and this without any ground from the hiſtory of the goſpel, only to ſerve an hypotheſis which they had taken up, and which they cannot maintain, unleſs they may have leave to make a ſuppoſition, for which they have nothing in truth to ſay, but only that it is neceſſary to defend an opinion which they are reſolved not to part with upon any terms?

This is ſo inartificial, not to ſay abſurd, a way of avoiding a difficulty, to take for granted whatever is neceſſary to that purpoſe, that no man of common ingenuity

nuity would make use of it; and there is no surer sign that a cause is greatly distressed, than to be driven to such a shift. For do but give a man leave to suppose what he pleases, and he may prove what he will, and avoid any difficulty whatever that can be objected to him.

Besides, that according to this device, the Son of God did not first come from heaven into the world, as the scripture seem every where to say, but first was in the world, and then went to heaven, and from thence came back into the world again; and he was not *in the beginning with God*, but was first in the world, and afterwards with God; whereas St. John says, that the *Word was in the beginning*, and then *was made flesh, and dwelt among us:* but they say, that he first *was made flesh*, and then a great while after was *in the beginning with God.* A supposition which is quite contrary to all the texts which I have mentioned.

Nor do the several parts of this interpretation of theirs agree very well together. *In the beginning*, that is, say they, when the gospel began to be published, *was the Word*; and then, that is, *in the beginning, he was with God;* that is, in heaven to receive from God that doctrine which he was to deliver to the world. But if by *the beginning* he meant the first publication of the gospel, he was not then with God, but had been with him, and was come back from him, before he entered upon his public ministry; which they make to be the meaning of *the beginning.* And *in the beginning he was God:* that is, say they, not God by nature, but by office and divine constitution: and yet in this again they fall foul upon themselves; for they say he was not declared to be God till after his resurrection, and his being advanced to the right hand of God: so that he was not God in their sense of *the beginning*; that is, when he entered upon his public ministry, and began to preach the gospel.

2*dly*, As to some other texts, which speak of his existence before his incarnation, as that he was *glorified with his Father before the world was*; and *before Abraham was, I am*; these they interpret thus, that *he was glorified with his Father before the world was*, and that he was *before Abraham was, viz.* in the divine foreknowledge and decree. But then surely they do not consider, that

that this is nothing but what might have been ſaid of any other man, and even of Abraham himſelf, that *before he was*, that is, before he had a real and actual exiſtence, he was in the purpoſe and decree of God; that is, before he was, God did intend he ſhould be; which is a ſenſe ſo very flat, that I can hardly abſtain from ſaying it is ridiculous. For certainly our Saviour did intend, by ſaying this of himſelf, to give himſelf ſome preference and advantage before Abraham: which this ſenſe and interpretation does not in the leaſt do; becauſe of any other man, as well as of our bleſſed Saviour, it may as truly be ſaid, that he was in the foreknowledge and decree of God before Abraham was born.

And I cannot but obſerve further, that our Saviour does not ſay, *before Abraham was, I was*; but *before Abraham was, I AM*. Which is the proper name of God, whereby is ſignified the eternal duration and permanency of his being. In which ſenſe he is ſaid by the Apoſtle to the Hebrews to be *the ſame yeſterday, and to day, and for ever*, Heb. xiii. 8. And ſo likeways he deſcribes himſelf in St. John's viſion, Rev. i. 8. *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, ſaith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty*. And that this is ſpoken of the Son, you may ſee in the ſame chapter, where he ſays of himſelf, v. 17. *I am the firſt and the laſt*. And ſo likewiſe he deſcribes himſelf again, Rev. xxii. 13. *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the firſt and the laſt*. And that we may not doubt who it is that thus deſcribes his own eternity, he, continuing ſtill to ſpeak in the ſame perſon, ſays, v. 16. *I Jeſus have ſent mine angel*, &c. After this I ſhall only obſerve, that all theſe expreſſions are the common deſcription which the ſcripture gives of the eternity of God, whoſe being is commenſurate to all the ſeveral reſpects of duration, paſt, preſent, and to come; beſides, that the attribute of *almighty* is alſo a part of this deſcription, which is ſo peculiar a property of God, I mean of him who is God by nature, that the ſcripture never gives it to any other.

2. I ſhall, in the next place, produce thoſe texts which do expreſsly affirm that the world, and all creatures whatſoever were made by him; and this will not only infer his

his existence before his incarnation, but from all eternity.

And for this, besides this passage of St. John, we have the Apostle to the Hebrews most express, who says, that *by him God made the worlds*, Heb. i. 2. And St. Paul likewise says the same more fully and particularly, Colos. i. 15. 16. calling Jesus Christ, who was the Son of God, *the first-born of every creature*; that is, as I have shewn in my former discourse, the heir and lord of the whole creation: *For by him* (says he) *were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible; whether they be thrones or dominions, principalities or powers*; for so he calls the several orders of angels: *all things were created by him and for him, and he is before all things*: or, as he is described in St. John's vision, *he is the beginning of the creation of God*; that is, the principle and efficient cause of the creation; or else, he was when all things began to be made; and therefore must be before any thing was created; and for that reason could not be a creature himself; and, consequently, must of necessity have been from all eternity.

Now, these texts must necessarily be understood of the old creation, and of the natural world; and not of the moral world, and the renovation and reformation of the minds and manners of men by the gospel: for that was only the world here below which was reformed by him, and not things in heaven; not the invisible world, not the several orders of good angels, *which kept their first station*, and have no need to be reformed and made anew; nor the devil and his evil angels; for though, since the preaching of the gospel, they have been under greater restraint, and kept more within bounds, yet we have no reason to think that they are at all reformed, but are devils still, and have the same malice and mind to do all the mischief to mankind that God will suffer them to do.

So that these texts seem, at first view, to be very plain and pressing of themselves; but they appear to be much more convincing, when we consider the groundless interpretations whereby they endeavour to evade the dint and force of them. For can any man that seriously attends to the perpetual style and phrase of the New Testament,

ment, and to the plain ſcope and drift of the Apoſtle's reaſoning in theſe texts, be induced to believe, that when St. Paul tells us, that *all things were created by him, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, viſible and inviſible; whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers:* I ſay, can any man of good ſenſe perſuade himſelf, that by all this the Apoſtle means no more, than the moral renovation of the world here below, and the reformation of mankind by Jeſus Chriſt, and his goſpel which was preached unto them?

But there is yet one text more to this purpoſe, which I have reſerved to the laſt place, becauſe I find Schlictingius and Crellius, in their joint comment upon it, to be put to their laſt ſhifts to avoid the force of it. It is in the epiſtle to the Hebrews, at the beginning of it; where the Apoſtle thus deſcribes the Son of God. *God* (ſays he) *hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken to us by his Son, whom he hath conſtituted heir of all things, by whom alſo he made the worlds,* Heb. i. 2. From whence he argues the excellency of the goſpel above the law; for the law was given by angels, but the goſpel by the Son of God; whoſe pre-eminence above the angels he ſhews at large in the two firſt chapters of this epiſtle.

And to this end he proves the two parts of the deſcription which had been given of him, namely, that God had *conſtituted him heir of all things*, v. 2. and that *by him he made the worlds.*

1*ſt*, That God had *conſtituted him heir over all things*; which is no where ſaid of the angels; but of him it is ſaid, that he was *made ſo much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they*, v. 7. The angels are only called God's miniſters, for which the apoſtle cites the words of the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. civ. 4. but to Chriſt he gives the title of *his Son*, and *his firſt-begotten*, by virtue whereof he is *heir of all things: for to which of the angels ſaid he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?* v. 6. And this I will agree with them to be ſpoken of Chriſt with reſpect to his reſurrection; by which, as St. Paul tells us, he was *powerfully declared to be the Son of God*, Rom. i. 4. This is the firſt prerogative of Chriſt above the angels.

angels. But there is a far greater yet behind; for he proves,

2dly, That he had not only the title of *God* given him, but that he was truly and really *God*, becauſe *he made the world*, v. 8. That the title of *God* was given him, he proves by a citation out of the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. xlv. 6. 7. *But unto the Son he ſaith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever*, &c. And that he was truly and really God, becauſe *he made the world*, he proves by a citation out of another pſalm, where it is ſaid of him, v. 10, 11, 12. *Thou, Lord, in the beginning haſt laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thy hands. They ſhall periſh*, &c.

Let us now ſee how Schlictingius and Crellius interpret this text, cited out of the Pſalmiſt by the Apoſtle, as ſpoken of Chriſt. They ſay *, that the author of this epiſtle "could not have referred to Chriſt the former "words *of this citation*, which ſpeak of the creation of "heaven and earth, unleſs he had taken it for granted, "that Chriſt is the moſt high God; eſpecially if they "be underſtood, as they muſt neceſſarily be *by thoſe "who take this for granted*, to be ſpoken in the firſt "place, and directly, to *or concerning* Chriſt. For ſince "all the words of the pſalm are manifeſtly ſpoken of "the moſt high God; but that Chriſt is that God, is "not ſignified, no not ſo much as by one word in that "pſalm; it is neceſſary, that if you will have theſe "words to be directed to Chriſt, you muſt take it for "granted, that Chriſt is that moſt high God of whom "the Pſalmiſt there ſpeaks."

Now, we will join iſſue with theſe interpreters, upon this conceſſion, *viz.* that the author of this epiſtle "could "not have referred theſe words, which ſpeak of the "creation of heaven and earth, to Chriſt, without ta-

"king

* *Ne referre quidem hæc priora verba, de cœli terræque creatione loquentia, ad Chriſtum potuiſſet autor, niſi pro conceſſo ſumſiſſet Chriſtum eſſe ſummum illum Deum, cœli et terræ creatorem; præſertim ſi ea, ut neceſſe foret, primò et directè ad Chriſtum dicta eſſe cenſeas. Nam eùm cæmia pſalmi verba manifeſtè de Deo loquuntur, Chriſtum autem Deum illum eſſe ne unico quidem verbo in toto hoc pſalmo indicetur; neceſſe eſt, ut ſi verba illa ad Chriſtum directa eſſe velis, pro conceſſo ſumas, Chriſtum eſſe Deum illum ſummum de quo in pſalmo ſermo eſt.*

" king it for granted, that Chriſt is truly that God who " made the world." And if the author of this epiſtle does affirm theſe words of the Pſalmiſt to be ſpoken of Chriſt, then they muſt acknowledge Chriſt to be the true God who made heaven and earth. But the author of this epiſtle does as evidently affirm theſe words to be ſpoken to or of Chriſt, as he does the words of any other text cited in this chapter: and for this I appeal to the common ſenſe of every man that reads them.

Theſe interpreters indeed are contented, that the latter part of this citation ſhould be ſpoken of Chriſt, but not the former. But why not the former as well as the latter, when they have ſo expreſsly told us, that " all " the words of this pſalm are manifeſtly ſpoken of God?" What is the myſtery of this? Could they not as eaſily have interpreted the former part, which ſpeaks of the creation of heaven and earth, concerning the moral world, and the new creation or reformation of mankind by Jeſus Chriſt and his goſpel, as well as ſo many other plain texts to the ſame purpoſe? No doubt they could as well have done it, and have ſet as good a face upon it when they had done it. But why then did they not do it? It was for a reaſon which they had no mind to tell, but yet it is not hard to be gueſſed at, namely, that, if they had admitted the former words to have been ſpoken of Chriſt, they knew not what to do with the latter part of this citation, v. 11. 12. *They ſhall periſh, but thou remaineſt; and they all ſhall wax old as doth a garment; and as a veſture ſhalt thou fold them up, and they ſhall be changed.* What ſhall *periſh*, and *wax old*, and *be changed?* Why, the earth and the heavens, which the Son had made; that is, the moral world, the reformation of mankind, and the new creation of things by the goſpel. All theſe muſt have undergone the ſame fate with the natural world, and muſt not only have been defaced, but utterly deſtroyed, and brought to nothing. This they would not ſay; but they did ſee it, though they would not ſeem to ſee it. And we may plainly ſee by this, that they can interpret a text right when neceſſity forceth them to it, and they cannot without great inconvenience to their cauſe avoid it. But when men have once reſolved to hold faſt an opinion they have

taken up, it then becomes not only convenient, but neceſſary, to underſtand nothing that makes againſt it. And this is truly the preſent caſe. But, in the mean time, where is ingenuity, and love of truth?

And thus I have, with all the clearneſs and brevity I could, ſearched to the very foundations of this new interpretation of this paſſage of the Evangeliſt, upon which the divinity of the Son of God is ſo firmly eſtabliſhed; and likewiſe of the groſs miſinterpretations of ſeveral other texts to the ſame purpoſe in this Evangeliſt, and in other books of the New Teſtament. All which interpretations I have endeavoured to ſhew to be not only contrary to the ſenſe of all antiquity; of which as Socinus had but little knowledge, ſo he ſeems to have made but little account; but to be alſo evidently contrary to the perpetual tenor and ſtyle of the Holy Scripture.

Before I go off from this argument, I cannot but take notice of one thing wherein our adverſaries in this cauſe do perpetually glory, as a mighty advantage which they think they have over us in this point of the divinity of the Son of God, and conſequently in that other point of the bleſſed Trinity, namely, that they have reaſon clearly on their ſide in this controverſy; and that the difficulties and abſurdities are much greater and plainer on our part than on theirs.

Here they are pleaſed to triumph without modeſty, and without meaſure: and yet, notwithſtanding this, I am not afraid here likewiſe to join iſſue with them, and am contented to have this matter brought to a fair trial at the bar of reaſon, as well as of ſcripure, expounded by the general tradition of the chriſtian church: I ſay by general tradition; which, next to ſcripture, is the beſt and ſureſt confirmation of this great point now in queſtion between us, and that which gives us the greateſt and trueſt light for the right underſtanding of the true ſenſe and meaning of ſcripture, not only in this, but in moſt other important doctrines of the chriſtian religion.

I am not without ſome good hopes, I will not ſay confidence; (for I never thought that to be ſo great an advantage to any cauſe, as ſome men would be glad to make others believe it is; hoping to help and ſupport a weak argument by a ſtrong and mighty confidence:

But

But ſurely modeſty never hurt any cauſe; and the confidence of man ſeems to me to be much like *the wrath of man*, which St. James tells us, chap. i. 20. *worketh not the righteouſneſs of God*; that is, it never does any good, it never ſerves any wiſe and real purpoſe of religion:)

I ſay, I am not without ſome good hopes, that I have in the foregoing diſcourſes clearly ſhewn, that the tenor of ſcripture and general tradition are on our ſide in this argument; and therefore I ſhall not need to give myſelf the trouble to examine this matter over again.

Now, as to the point of reaſon, the great difficulty and abſurdity which they object to our doctrine concerning this myſtery, amounts to thus much, that it is not only above reaſon, but plainly contrary to it.

As to its being above reaſon, which they are loth to admit any thing to be; this, I think, will bear no great diſpute; becauſe, if they would be pleaſed to ſpeak out, they can mean no more by this, but that our reaſon is not able fully to comprehend it. But what then? Are there no myſteries in religion? That I am ſure they will not ſay; becauſe God, whoſe infinite nature and perfections are the very foundation of all religion, is certainly the greateſt myſtery of all other, and the moſt incomprehenſible: but we muſt not, nay they will not for this reaſon deny, that there is ſuch a being as God. And therefore, if there be myſteries in religion, it is no reaſonable objection againſt them, that we cannot fully comprehend them; becauſe all myſteries, in what kind ſoever, whether in religion or in nature, ſo long, and ſo far as they are myſteries, are for that very reaſon incomprehenſible.

But they urge the matter much farther, that this particular myſtery now under debate, is plainly contrary to reaſon. And if they can make this good, I will confeſs that they have gained a great point upon us. But then they are to be put in mind, that to make this good againſt us, they muſt clearly ſhew ſome plain contradiction in this doctrine; which I could never yet ſee done by any. Great difficulty, I acknowledge, there is in the explication of it; in which the further we go, beyond what God has thought fit to reveal to us in ſcripture

concerning it, the more we are intangled: and that which men are pleaſed to call an explaining of it, does in my apprehenſion often make it more obſcure; that is, leſs plain than it was before; which does not ſo very well agree with a pretence of explication.

Here then I fix my foot, that there are three differences in the Deity, which the ſcripture ſpeaks of by the names of *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghoſt*, and every where ſpeaks of them, as we uſe to do of three diſtinct perſons: and therefore I ſee no reaſon, why in this argument we ſhould nicely abſtain from uſing the word *perſon*, though I remember that St. Jerome does ſomewhere deſire to be excuſed from it.

Now, concerning theſe three, I might, in the firſt place, urge that plain and expreſs text, 1 John v. 7. *There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghoſt; and theſe three are one.* But upon this I will not now inſiſt, becauſe it is pretended, that in ſome copies of greateſt antiquity this verſe is omitted; the contrary whereof is, I think, capable of being made out very clearly. But this matter would be too long to be debated at preſent.

However that be, thus much is certain, and cannot be denied, that our Saviour commanded his Apoſtles to *baptize all nations in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt*; and that the Apoſtles, in their epiſtles, do, in their moſt uſual form of benediction join theſe three together. And it is yet further certain, that not only the name and title of *God*, but the moſt incommunicable properties and perfections of the Deity, are in ſcripture frequently aſcribed to the Son and the Holy Ghoſt; one property only excepted, which is peculiar to the Father, as he is the principle and fountain of the Deity, That he is of himſelf, and of no other; which is not, nor can be ſaid of the Son and Holy Ghoſt.

Now, let any man ſhew any plain and downright contradiction in all this; or any other difficulty beſides this, that the particular manner of the exiſtence of theſe three differences or perſons in the divine nature, expreſſed in ſcripture by the names of *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghoſt*, is incomprehenſible by our finite underſtandings, and inexplicable by us. In which, I do not

ſee

ſee what abſurdity there is, ſince our adverſaries cannot deny that many things certainly are, the particular manner of whoſe exiſtence we can neither comprehend nor explain.

Let us now ſee, whether the opinion of our adverſaries hath not greater difficulties in it, and more palpable abſurdities following from it. They ſay, that the Son of God is a mere creature; not God by nature, and yet truly and really God by office, and by divine appointment and conſtitution; to whom the very ſame honour and worſhip is to be given, which we give to him who is God by nature.

And can they diſcern no difficulty, no abſurdity in this? What! no abſurdity in bringing idolatry by a back-door into the chriſtian religion, one main deſign whereof was, to baniſh idolatry out of the world? And will they in good earneſt conteſt this matter with us, that the giving divine worſhip to a mere creature is not idolatry? And can they vindicate themſelves in this point any other way, than what will in a great meaſure acquit both the Pagans and the Papiſts from the charge of idolatry?

What! no abſurdity in a God as it were but of yeſterday; in a creature-god; in a God merely by poſitive inſtitution: and this in oppoſition to a plain moral precept of eternal obligation, and to the fixed and immutable nature and reaſon of things?

So that, to avoid the ſhadow and appearance of a plurality of deities, they run really into it, and for any thing I can ſee, into downright idolatry, by *worſhipping a creature beſides the Creator, who is bleſſed for ever*, Rom. i. 25.

They can by no means allow two Gods by nature: no more can we. But they can willingly admit of two Gods; the one by nature, and the other by office; to whom they are content to pay the ſame honour, which is due to him who is God by nature. Provided Chriſt will be contented to be but a creature, they will deal more liberally with him in another way than in reaſon is fit.

And do they ſee no abſurdity in all this: nothing that is contrary to reaſon and good ſenſe; nothing that

feels like inconsistency and contradiction? Do they consider how often God hath declared, that *he will not give his glory to another?* and that the apostle describes idolatry to be the giving service, or worship, to things *which by nature are no gods?* Gal. iv. 8.

Surely, if reason, guided by divine revelation, were to chuse a god, it would make choice of one who is declared in scripture to be *the only begotten of the Father, the first and the last, the beginning and the end, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*, much rather than a mere creature, who did not begin to be till about seventeen hundred years ago.

I only propose these things, without any artificial aggravation, to their most serious and impartial consideration; after which I cannot think that these great masters of reason can think it so easy a matter to extricate themselves out of these difficulties. The God of truth lead us into all truth, and enlighten the minds of those who are in error, and *give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth*, for his sake who is *the way, the truth, and the life.*

And thus much may suffice to have said upon this argument, which I am sensible is mere controversy: a thing which I seldom meddle with, and do not delight to dwell upon. But my text, which is so very proper for this season, hath almost necessarily engaged me in it; besides, that I think it a point of that concernment, that all Christians ought to be well instructed in it. And I have chosen rather once for all to handle it fully, and to go to the bottom of it, than in every sermon to be flirting at it, without saying any thing to the purpose against it: a way which, in my opinion, is neither proper to establish men in the truth, nor to convince them of their error.

I shall only at present make this short reflection upon the whole: That we ought to treat the Holy Scriptures as the oracles of God, with all reverence and submission of mind to the doctrine therein revealed; and to interpret them with that candour and simplicity which is due to the sincere declarations of God, intended for the instruction, and not for the deception and delusion of men: I say, we should treat them as the oracles of God, and not

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like the doubtful oracles of the Heathen deities, that is in truth of the devil; which were contrived and calculated on purpoſe to deceive, containing, and for the moſt part intending a ſenſe directly contrary to the appearing and moſt obvious meaning of the words: for the devil was the firſt author of equivocation; though the Jeſuits have ſince made it a lawful way of lying, which their father, of whom they learned it, had not credit and authority enough to do.

And it deſerves likeways to be very well conſidered by us, that nothing hath given a greater force to the exceptions of the church of Rome againſt the Holy Scriptures being a ſufficient and certain rule of faith, than the uncertainty into which they have brought the plaineſt texts imaginable, for the eſtabliſhing of doctrines of greateſt moment in the Chriſtian religion, by their remote and wreſted interpretation of them; which way of dealing with them, ſeems to be really more contumelious to thoſe Holy Oracles, than the downright rejecting of their authority; becauſe this is a fair and open way of attacking them; whereas the other is an inſidious, and therefore more dangerous way of undermining them.

But as for us who do in good earneſt believe the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, let us take all our doctrines and opinions from thoſe clear fountains of truth, not diſturbed and darkened by ſearching anxiouſly into all the poſſible ſenſes that the ſeveral words and expreſſions of ſcripture can bear, and by forcing that ſenſe upon them which is moſt remote and unnatural, and in the mean time wilfully overlooking and paſſing by that ſenſe which is moſt obvious and eaſy to the common apprehenſion of any unbiaſſed and impartial reader: This is to uſe the Holy Scriptures as the church of Rome hath done many holy and good men whom they are pleaſed to brand with the odious name of heretics, to torture them till they ſpeak the mind of their tormentors, though never ſo contrary to their own.

I will now conclude this whole diſcourſe with a ſaying which I heard from a great and judicious man, *Non amo nimis argutam theologiam:* "I love no doctrines in divi-
"nity which ſtand ſo very much upon quirk and ſub-
"tilty."

And

And I cannot, upon this occasion, forbear to say, that those doctrines of religion, and those interpretations of scripture have ever been to me the most suspected, which need abundance of wit, and a great many critic isms, to make them out. And, considering the wisdom and goodness of almighty God, I cannot possibly believe, but that all things necessary to be believed and practised by Christians, in order to their eternal salvation, are plainly contained in the Holy Scriptures. God surely hath not dealt so hardly with mankind, as to make any thing necessary to be believed or practised by us, which he hath not made sufficiently plain to the capacity of the unlearned as well as of the learned. God forbid that it should be impossible for any man to be saved, and to get to heaven, without a great deal of learning to direct and carry him thither, when the far greatest part of mankind have no learning at all. It was well said by Erasmus, "That it was never well with the Christian world since "it began to be a matter of so much subtilty and wit "for a man to be a true Christian."

SERMON XLV.

Concerning the incarnation of Christ.

Preached in the church of St. Lawrence-Jewry, December 21. 1680.

JOHN i. 14.

The Word was made flesh.

The third sermon on this text.

THE last year, about this time, and upon the same occasion of the annual commemoration of the incarnation and nativity of our blessed Lord and Saviour, I began to discourse to you upon these words; in which I told you were contained three great points con-

concerning our Saviour, the author and founder of our religion.

1. His incarnation: *The Word was made* (or became) *fleſh.*

2. His life and converſation here among us: *And dwelt among us*; ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, *he pitched his tabernacle among us*; he lived here below in this world, and for ſome time made his reſidence and abode with us.

3. That in this ſtate of his humiliation, he gave great and clear evidence of his divinity. Whilſt he appeared as a man, and lived amongſt us, there were great and glorious teſtimonies given of him, that he was the Son of God; and that in ſo peculiar a manner, as no creature can be ſaid to be: *And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

I began with the firſt of theſe, namely, his incarnation: *The Word was made fleſh.* For the full and clear explication of which words, I propoſed to conſider theſe two things.

Firſt, The perſon here ſpoken of, and who it is that is here ſaid to be incarnate, or *made fleſh*, namely, *the Word.* And this I have handled at large in my two former diſcourſes upon this text. I ſhall now proceed, in the

Second place, to give ſome account of the nature and manner of this incarnation, ſo far as the ſcripture hath thought fit to reveal and declare this myſtery to us. *The Word was made fleſh*, that is, he who is perſonally called *the Word*, and whom the Evangeliſt hath ſo fully and clearly deſcribed in the beginning of his goſpel, he became fleſh; that is, aſſumed our nature, and became man; for ſo the word *fleſh* is frequently uſed in ſcripture for man, or human nature.

So that, by *the Word's becoming fleſh*, that is, man, the Evangeliſt did not only intend to expreſs to us, that he aſſumed a human body, without a ſoul, but that he became a perfect man, conſiſting of ſoul and body united. It is very probable indeed, that the Evangeliſt did purpoſely chuſe the word *fleſh*, which ſignifies the frail and mortal part of humanity, to denote to us the great condeſcenſion of the Son of God, in aſſuming our nature,

ture, with all its infirmities, and becoming subject to frailty and mortality for our sake.

Having thus explained the meaning of this proposition, *The Word was made flesh*, I shall, in a further prosecution of this argument, take into consideration these three things.

1. I shall consider more distinctly what may reasonably be supposed to be implied in this expression of *the Word's being made flesh*.

2. I shall consider the objections which are commonly brought against this incarnation of the Son of God, from the seeming impossibility or incongruity of the thing.

3. And because, after all that can be said in answer to those objections, it may still appear to us very strange, that God, who could, without all this circumstance and condescension, even almost beneath the majesty of the great God, at least, as we are apt to think, have given laws to mankind, and have offered forgiveness of sins, and eternal life, upon their repentance for sins past, and sincere though imperfect obedience for the future: I say, it may seem strange, that, notwithstanding this, God should yet make choice of this way and method of our salvation: I shall therefore, in the last place, endeavour to give some probable account of this strange and wonderful dispensation; and shew, that it was done in great condescension to the weakness and common prejudices of mankind; and that, when it is thoroughly considered, it will appear to be much more for our comfort and advantage, than any other way which the wisdom of this world would have been apt to devise and pitch upon. And in all this I shall all along take either the plain declarations of scripture, or the pregnant intimations of it, for my ground and guide.

I. I shall consider more distinctly what may reasonably be supposed to be implied in this expression of *the Word's being made flesh*; namely, these five things.

1. The truth and reality of the thing; that the Son of God did not only appear in the form of human flesh, but did really assume it. *The Word was made flesh*, as the Evangelist expressly declares. For if this had been only a phantasm and apparition, as some heretics of old did fancy,

fancy, it would in all probability have been like the appearance of angels mentioned in the Old Teſtament, ſudden, and of ſhort continuance; and would, after a little while, have vaniſhed and diſappeared. But *he dwelt among us*, and converſed familiarly with us a long time, and for many years together. And the ſcripture uſeth all the expreſſions which are proper to ſignify a real man, and a real human body; and there were all the ſigns and evidences of reality that could be: for *the Word* is ſaid to be *made fleſh*; and Chriſt is ſaid to be *of the ſeed of David according to the fleſh*, and to be *made of a woman*; and all this to ſhew, that he was a real man, and had a real and ſubſtantial body; for he was born, and, by degrees, grew up to be a man, and did perform all ſuch actions as are natural and proper to men. He continued a great while in the world, and at laſt ſuffered and died, and was laid in the grave. He did not vaniſh and diſappear like a phantaſm or ſpirit, but he died like other men; and his body was raiſed again out of the grave; and, after he was riſen, he converſed forty days upon earth, and permitted his body to be handled; and, laſt of all, was viſibly taken up into heaven.

So that either we muſt grant him to have had a real body, or we have cauſe to doubt whether all mankind be not mere phantaſms and apparitions: for greater evidence no man can give, that he is really clothed with and carries about him a true and ſubſtantial body, than the Son of God did *in the days of his fleſh*. It is to me very wonderful, upon what ground, or indeed to what end the heretics of old, Marcion and others, did deny the reality of Chriſt's fleſh. Surely they had a great mind to be heretics, who took up ſo ſenſeleſs an opinion, for no reaſon, and to no purpoſe.

2. Another thing implied in *the Word's being made fleſh*, is, that this was done peculiarly for the benefit and advantage of men: *The Word was made fleſh*; that is, became man; for ſo I have ſhewn the word *fleſh* to be often uſed in ſcripture. And this the author of the epiſtle to the Hebrews takes very ſpecial notice of as a great grace and favour of God to mankind, that his Son appeared in our nature, and conſequently for our ſalvation; as it is ſaid in the Nicene creed, "who for us "men,

" men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, " and was incarnate, &c." *For verily* (says the Apostle, Heb. ii. 16.) *he took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham*; οὐ γὰρ δήπου ἀγγέλων ἐπιλαμβάνεται, *he did not assume the angelical nature*; so our translators understood the phrase; but the word also signifies *to take hold* of a thing which is falling, as well as to *assume* or *take on him*. *He did not take hold of the angels* when they were falling, but suffered them to lapse irrecoverably into misery and ruin; but *he took hold* of human nature when it was falling, and particularly *of the seed of Abraham*; and by *the seed of Abraham*, that is, by himself, *in whom all the nations of the earth were blessed*, he brought salvation, first to the Jews, and then to the rest of mankind. The Apostle chuses to derive this blessing from Abraham, that so he might bring it nearer to the Jews, to whom he wrote this epistle; and might thereby more effectually recommend the gospel to them, and the glad tidings of that great salvation in which they had so peculiar an interest.

And it is some confirmation of the interpretation I have given of that expression, *He took not on him*, &c. that the Evangelist uses the very same word for *taking hold of* one that was ready to sink; for so it is said of St. Peter when he was *ready to sink*, that, Matth. xiv. 31. *Christ put forth his hand*, καὶ ἐπιλαβόμενος, *and caught hold of him*, and saved him from drowning. And thus the Son of God caught hold of mankind, which was ready to sink into eternal perdition. He *laid hold of* our nature, or, as it is expressed in the same chapter, *he took part of flesh and blood*, that in our nature he might be capable of effecting our redemption and deliverance.

But it is no where said in scripture, not the least intimation given there, that the Son of God ever shewed such grace and favour to the angels; but *the Word became flesh*, that is, became man. He did not assume the angelical nature, but was contented to be cloathed with the rags of humanity, and to be *made in the likeness of sinful flesh*, that is, of sinful man.

3. This expression, of *the Word's being made flesh*, may further imply his assuming the infirmities and submitting to the miseries of human nature. This I collect from

from the word *fleſh*, by which the ſcripture often uſes to expreſs our frail and mortal nature. The Son of God did not only condeſcend to be made man, but alſo to become mortal and miſerable for our ſakes. He ſubmitted to all thoſe things which are accounted moſt grievous and calamitous to human nature; to hunger and want, to ſhame and contempt, to bitter pains and agonies, and to a moſt cruel and diſgraceful death: ſo that in this ſenſe alſo he became fleſh, not only by being clothed with human nature, but by becoming liable to all the frailties and ſufferings of it; of which he had a greater ſhare than any of the ſons of men ever had; for never was ſorrow like to his ſorrow, nor ſufferings like to his ſufferings; the weight and bitterneſs whereof was ſuch, as to wring from him, the meekeſt and moſt patient endurer of ſufferings that ever was, that doleful complaint, *My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?*

4. In this expreſſion, *The word was made fleſh*, is likeways implied the union of the divinity with human nature in one perſon. And this the text expreſſeth in ſuch words, as ſeem to ſignify a moſt perfect, and intimate, and vital union of the divine and human natures of Chriſt in one perſon. *The word was made* (or became) *fleſh:* which what elſe can it ſignify, but one of theſe two things; either that the eternal Word, and only begotten Son of God, was changed into a man, which is not only impoſſible to be, but impious to imagine; or elſe, that the Son of God did aſſume our nature, and became man, by his divinity being united to human nature, as the ſoul is vitally united to the body, without either being changed into it, or confounded with it, or ſwallowed up by it, as the Eutychian heretics fancied the human nature of Chriſt to be ſwallowed up of his divinity: which, had it been ſo, St. John had expreſſed himſelf very untowardly, when he ſays, *The Word became fleſh*; for it had been quite contrary, and fleſh had become the Word, being changed into it, and ſwallowed up by it, and loſt in it.

The only thing then that we can reaſonably imagine to be the meaning of this expreſſion, is this, that the Son of God aſſumed our nature, and united himſelf with it, as our ſouls are united with our bodies; and as the

ſoul and body united make one perſon, and yet retain their diſtinct natures and properties; ſo may we conceive the divine and human natures in Chriſt to be united into one perſon; and this without any change or confuſion of the two natures.

I ſay, the divinity united itſelf with human nature: for though fleſh be only mentioned in the text, yet he did not only aſſume a human body, which was the hereſy of Apollinaris and his followers, upon a miſtake of this, and ſome other texts of ſcripture; but he aſſumed the whole human nature; that is, a human ſoul united to a real and natural body: for ſo I have ſhewn the word *fleſh* to be frequently uſed in ſcripture, not only for the body, but for the whole man, by an uſual figure of ſpeech: as, on the other hand, *ſoul* is frequently uſed for the whole man or perſon. So many ſouls are ſaid to have gone down with Jacob into Egypt; that is, ſo many perſons.

But this I need not inſiſt longer upon, our Saviour being ſo frequently in ſcripture, and ſo expreſsly, ſaid to be a man; which could with no propriety of ſpeech have been ſaid, had he only aſſumed a human body: nor could he have been ſaid to have been *made in all things like unto us, ſin only excepted*, had he only had a human body, but not a ſoul: for then the meaning muſt have been, that he had been *made in all things like unto us*, that is, like to a man, that only excepted which chiefly makes the man; that is, the ſoul: and the addition of thoſe words, *ſin only excepted*, had been no leſs ſtrange; becauſe a human body without a ſoul, is neither capable of being ſaid to have ſin, or to be without it.

And this may ſuffice to have been ſpoken in general concerning that great myſtery of the hypoſtatical (as they that love hard words love to call it) or perſonal union of the divine and human natures in the perſon of our bleſſed Saviour. In the more particular explication whereof, it is not ſafe for our ſhallow underſtandings to wade farther than the ſcripture goes before us, for fear we go out of our depth, and loſe ourſelves in the profound inquiry into the deep things of God, which he has not thought fit in this preſent ſtate of darkneſs and imperfection, to reveal more plainly and fully to us. It

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ought to be thought ſufficient, that the ſcripture, ſpeaking of the ſame perſon, Jeſus Chriſt our bleſſed Saviour, doth frequently and expreſsly call him both *God* and *man*: which how it can be ſo eaſily conceived upon any other ſuppoſition than that of the union of the divine and human natures in one perſon, I muſt confeſs that I am not able to comprehend.

5. And laſtly, all this which I have ſhewn to be implied in this propoſition, *The Word was made fleſh*, does ſignify to us the wonderful and amazing condeſcenſion and love of God to mankind, in ſending his Son into the world, and ſubmitting him to this way and method for our ſalvation and recovery. *The Word was made fleſh*: what a ſtep is here made in order to the reconciling of men to God? from heaven to earth; from the top of glory and majeſty to the loweſt gulf of meanneſs and miſery! The Evangeliſt ſeems here to uſe the word *fleſh*, which ſignifies the meaneſt and vileſt part of humanity, to expreſs to us how low the Son of God was contented to ſtoop for the redemption of man. *The Word was made fleſh*; two terms at the greateſt diſtance from one another, are here brought together: the Son of God is here expreſſed to us by one of his higheſt and moſt glorious titles, *the Word*; which imports both *power* and *wiſdom*; 1 Cor. i. 24. *Chriſt the power of God, and the wiſdom of God*, as the Apoſtle calls him: and human nature is here deſcribed by its vileſt part, *fleſh*; which imports frailty and infirmity. *The Word became fleſh*; that is, ſubmitted to that from which it was at the greateſt diſtance: he who was *the power of God, and the wiſdom of God*, ſubmitted not only to be called, but really to become a frail and miſerable man; not only to aſſume our nature, but to put on all the infirmities, and, which is the greateſt of all, the mortality of it.

And this is the *great myſtery of godlineſs*, that is, of the chriſtian religion, that *God* ſhould be *manifeſted in the fleſh*, and become man, with the moſt gracious and merciful deſign, to bring man back again to God; that he ſhould become a miſerable and a mortal man, to ſave us from eternal death, and to make us partakers of everlaſting life; that the Son of God ſhould condeſcend to inhabit our vile nature, to wear rags, and to become a

beggar for our ſakes: and all this, not only to repair thoſe diſmal ruins which ſin had made in it, and to reſtore us to our former eſtate; but to better and advance our condition, and by degrees to bring us to a ſtate of much greater perfection and happineſs than that from which we fell:

And that he ſhould become man on purpoſe that he might *dwell among us*, and converſe with us, and thoroughly inſtruct us in our duty, and ſhew us the way to eternal life by his heavenly doctrine, and, as it were, take us by the hand, and lead us in that way by the perfect and familiar example of a moſt blameleſs and holy life; ſhewing us how God himſelf thought fit to live in this world, when he was pleaſed to become man:

That by converſing with us in the likeneſs and nature of man, he might become a human, and in ſome ſort an equal and familiar, an imitable and encouraging example of innocency and goodneſs, of meekneſs and humility, of patience and ſubmiſſion to the will of God, under the ſoreſt afflictions and ſufferings; and, in a word, a moſt perfect pattern of a divine and heavenly converſation upon earth:

And that by this means we might, for our greater encouragement in holineſs and virtue, ſee all that which the law of God requires of us, exemplified in our nature, and really performed and practiſed by a man like ourſelves:

And that likeways in our nature he might conquer and triumph over the two great enemies of our ſalvation, the world, and the devil; and by firſt ſuffering death, and then overcoming it, and by reſcuing our nature from the power of it by his reſurrection from the dead, he might *deliver us from the fear of death*, and give us the glorious hopes of a bleſſed immortality: for by aſſuming our frail and mortal nature, he became capable of ſuffering, and of ſhedding his precious blood for us, and by that means of purchaſing *forgiveneſs of ſins*, and *eternal redemption for us:*

And further yet, that, by being ſubject to the miſeries and infirmities of humanity, he might, from his own experience, the ſureſt and moſt ſenſible ſort of knowledge and inſtruction, learn to have a more compaſſionate ſenſe

of

of our infirmities, and be more apt to commiserate us in all our sufferings and temptations, and more ready to succour us labouring under them:

And finally, that, as a reward of his obedience and sufferings in our nature, he might in the same nature be *exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high*, there to continue *for ever to make intercession for us.*

II. I shall, in the next place, consider the objections against the incarnation of the Son of God, from the supposed impossibility and incongruity of the thing. I shall mention three, and endeavour, in as few words as I can, to give a clear and satisfactory answer to them.

1. It is objected, That the incarnation of the Son of God, as I have explained it, necessarily supposing an union of the divinity with human nature, is, if not altogether impossible, yet a very unintelligible thing.

Now, that there is no impossibility in the thing, seems to be very evident from the instance whereby I have endeavoured to illustrate it, of the union between the soul and the body of man, which we must acknowledge to be a thing possible, because we are sure that it is; and yet no man can explain, either to himself, or to any one else, the manner how it is, or can be conceived to be: but, for all that, we are as certain, as we can be of any thing, that it is so.

And is it not every whit as possible for God, if he so please, to unite himself to human nature, as it is for the soul to be united to the body? And that we are not able to conceive the manner how this is or can be done, ought not in reason to be any prejudice against the truth and certainty of the thing. This indeed may make it seem strange to us, but by no means incredible; because we do most firmly believe a great many things to be, the manner of whose being we do not at all comprehend. And therefore I take it for an undoubted principle, which no man can gainsay, That to assure us that a thing really is, it is not necessary for us to know the manner how it is, or can be: it is sufficient for us to know, that the thing is not impossible; and of that we have the very best demonstration that can be, if we be sure that it is.

2. Supposing this thing to be possible, and capable in any measure to be understood, which yet I have shewn

not to be neceſſary to our firm belief of it; it is further objected, That it ſeems to be a thing very incongruous, and much beneath the dignity of the Son of God, to be united to human nature, and to ſubmit to ſo near an alliance with that which is ſo very mean and deſpicable; yea to be infinitely more below him, than for the greateſt prince in this world to match with the pooreſt and moſt contemptible beggar.

But herein ſurely we meaſure God too much by ourſelves; and becauſe we who are evil have ſeldom ſo much goodneſs as to ſtoop beneath ourſelves for the benefit and good of others, we are apt to think that God hath not ſo much goodneſs neither; and becauſe our ill-nature, and pride, and folly, as indeed all pride is folly, will not ſuffer us to do it, we preſently conclude that it doth not become God. But what Pliny ſaid to the Emperor Trajan concerning earthly kings and potentates, is much more true of the Lord of glory, the great King of heaven and earth; *Cui nihil ad augendum faſtigium ſupereſt, hoc uno modo creſcere poteſt, ſi ſeipſum ſubmittat, ſecurus magnitudinis ſuæ:* "He that is at the top, and can riſe "no higher, hath yet this one way left to become great-"er, by ſtooping beneath himſelf;" which he may very ſafely do, "being ſecure of his own greatneſs." The lower any being, be he never ſo high, condeſcends to do good, the glory of his goodneſs ſhines ſo much the brighter. Men are many times too proud and ſtiff to bend, too perverſe and ill-natured to ſtoop beneath their own little greatneſs for the good of others: but God, whoſe *ways are not as our ways*, and whoſe *thoughts are* as much *above our* low and narrow *thoughts, as the heavens are high above the earth*, did not diſdain, nor think it below him to become man for the good of mankind, and, as much as the divinity is capable of being ſo, to become miſerable to make us happy. We may be afraid, that if we humble ourſelves, we ſhall be deſpiſed; that if we ſtoop, others will get above us, and trample upon us: but God, though he condeſcend never ſo low, is ſtill ſecure of his own greatneſs, and that none can take it from him.

So that in truth, and according to right reaſon, it was no real diminution or diſparagement to the Son of God,

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to become man for the salvation of mankind; but, on the contrary, it was a most glorious humility, and the greatest instance of the truest goodness that ever was. And therefore the Apostle to the Hebrews, Heb. v. 4. 5. when he says, that *Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest, but was appointed of God* to this office, *as was Aaron*, does hereby seem to intimate, that it was a glory to the Son of God to be made a high priest for the sons of men: for though it was a strange condescension, yet was it likewise a most wonderful argument of his goodness, which is the highest glory of the divine nature.

In short, if God for our sakes did submit himself to a condition which we may think did less become him, here is great cause of thankfulness, but none surely of cavil and exception. We have infinite reason to acknowledge and admire his goodness, but none at all to upbraid him with his kindness, and to quarrel with him for having descended so much beneath himself, to testify his love to us, and his tender concernment for our happiness. Besides, that when we have said all we can about this matter, I hope we will allow God himself to be the best and most competent judge what is fit for God to do; and that he needs not to take counsel of any of his creatures, what will best become him in this or any other case: Job xxxiii. 12. 13. *Behold in this thou art not just: I will answer thee, that God is greater than man. Why dost thou dispute against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters.*

3. If our reason could get over this difficulty, and admit that God might become man; yet it seems very unsuitable to the Son of God, and to his great design of instructing and reforming mankind, to appear in so low and suffering a condition. This, to the heathen philosophers, who, as the Apostle tells us, *by wisdom knew not God*, did not only seem unreasonable, but even ridiculous. So St. Paul tells us, *We* (says he, 1 Cor. i. 23.) *preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.* To think that so poor and mean a man was fit to give laws to mankind, and to awe the minds of men by the authority of his doctrine; that one who was put to death himself, should be believed by others, when he promised to them life and immortality

mortality in another world, could not but appear very ſtrange and unreaſonable.

For anſwer to this, beſides other excellent reaſons and ends which the ſcripture expreſsly aſſigns, of our bleſſed Saviour's humiliation, in his aſſuming our nature, with the frailties and miſeries of it; as, that he might be a teacher, and an example to us; that, by his bitter paſſion, he might make expiation for ſin, and ſet us a pattern of the greateſt meekneſs and patience under the greateſt provocations and ſufferings; that, having ſuffered ſo grievouſly himſelf, he might know how to commiſerate and pity us in all our temptations and ſufferings; that *by death he might deſtroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver thoſe who through fear of death, were all their lifetime ſubject to bondage*: I ſay, beſides all this, it was of great uſe that the great teacher and reformer of mankind ſhould live in ſo mean and afflicted a condition, to confront the pride and vanity of the world by this conſideration, that the Son of God, and the very beſt man that ever was, was a beggar, and *had not where to lay his head*: and likewiſe to convince men of theſe two great truths, That God may grievouſly afflict thoſe whom he dearly loves; and, That it is poſſible for men to be innocent and contented in the midſt of poverty, and reproach, and ſufferings.

Had our bleſſed Saviour appeared in the perſon and pomp of a great temporal prince, the influence of his authority and example would probably have made more hypocrites and ſervile converts, but not have perſuaded men one jot more to be inwardly holy and good. The great arguments that muſt do that, muſt not be fetched from the pomp and proſperity of this world, but from the great and eternal recompences of the other.

And it is very well worth our obſervation, that nothing puzzled Cæſar Vaninus, who was perhaps the firſt, and the only martyr for Atheiſm that ever was; I ſay, nothing puzzled him more, than that he could not, from the hiſtory of our Saviour's life and actions, written by the Evangeliſts with ſo native a ſimplicity, faſten upon him any probable imputation of a ſecular intereſt and deſign in any thing that he ſaid or did. No doubt but Vaninus,

ninus, before he made this acknowledgment, had ſearched very narrowly into this matter; and, could he have found any colour for ſuch an imputation, he would have thought it ſufficient to have blaſted both him and his religion.

You may be pleaſed to conſider further, that it was the opinion of the wiſeſt Jews, that the beſt men, the children of God, who called God their father, were many times expoſed to the greateſt ſufferings and reproaches, for the trial of their faith, and meekneſs, and patience; as we ſee at large in the Wiſdom of Solomon; where, ſpeaking of the malice and enmity of the wicked to one that was eminently righteous, he brings them in ſaying after this manner, chap. ii. 12. 13. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. *Let us lie in wait for the righteous; becauſe he is not for our turn, and he is clean contrary to our doings: he upbraideth us with our offending the law, and objecteth to our infamy the tranſgreſſings of our youth. He profeſſeth to have the knowledge of God; and he calleth himſelf the child of the Lord, He is grievous unto us even to behold: for his life is not like other mens; his ways are of another faſhion. We are eſteemed of him as counterfeits: he abſtaineth from our ways as from filthineſs: he pronounceth the end of the juſt to be bleſſed, and maketh his boaſt that God is his father, Let us ſee if his words be true, and what ſhall happen in the end of him. For if the juſt man be the ſon of God, he will help him, and deliver him from the hands of his enemies. Let us examine him with deſpitefulneſs and torture, that we know may his meekneſs, and prove his patience. Let us condemn him to a ſhameful death,* &c.

This is ſo exact a character of our bleſſed Saviour, both in reſpect of the holineſs and innocency of his life, and of the reproaches and ſufferings which he met with from the wicked and malicious Jews, who perſecuted him all his life, and at laſt conſpired his death, that whoever reads this paſſage, can hardly forbear to think it a prophetical deſcription of the innocency and ſufferings of the bleſſed Jeſus: for he certainly, in the moſt eminent manner, was *the Son of God*, being called by the Evangeliſt, *the only begotten of the Father*.

Or if this was not a prediction concerning our bleſſed Saviour, yet thus much at leaſt may be concluded from it,

it, that in the judgment of the wiſeſt among the Jews, it was not unworthy of the goodneſs and wiſdom of the divine providence, to permit the beſt man to be ſo ill treated by wicked men; and further, that, in their judgment, the innocency and virtues of an eminently righteous man are then ſet off to the beſt advantage, and do ſhine forth with the greateſt luſtre, when he is under the hardeſt circumſtances of ſuffering and perſecution from an evil world.

Add to this likewiſe, that the beſt and wiſeſt of the heathen philoſophers do frequently inculcate ſuch doctrines as theſe: That "worldly greatneſs and power "are not be admired, but rather to be deſpiſed by a "wiſe man:" That "men may be very good, and dear "to the gods, and yet liable to the greateſt miſeries and "ſufferings in this world." That "whoever ſuffers "unjuſtly, and bears it patiently, gives the greateſt te"ſtimony to goodneſs, and does moſt effectually recom"mend piety and virtue, as things of greater value than "the eaſe and pleaſure of this preſent life:" Nay further, That "a good man, caſt into the hardeſt circum"ſtances of poverty and miſery, of reproach and ſuf"fering, is the fitteſt perſon of all other to be the mi"niſter, and apoſtle, and preacher of God to man"kind:" which are the very words of Arrian, a heathen philoſopher, in his diſcourſes on Epictetus. Now, ſurely, they who ſay ſuch things, have no reaſon to object to our bleſſed Saviour's low and ſuffering condition, as misbecoming one that was to be the great teacher and reformer of the world.

And as to that part of the objection, That he who ſo freely promiſed immortality to others, could not, or however did not ſave himſelf from death; this vaniſheth into nothing, when we conſider that he reſcued himſelf from the power of the grave. And it is ſo far from being ridiculous, to rely upon his promiſe of raiſing us up from the dead, that the objection itſelf is really ſo; for can any thing be more reaſonable, than to rely upon him for our hopes of immortality, who, by riſing from the grave himſelf, and by conquering the powers of death and darkneſs, and triumphing openly over them by his viſible aſcenſion into heaven, hath given ſo plain and

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ſenſible a demonſtration to all mankind, that he is able to make good to the uttermoſt all the glorious promiſes which he hath made to us, of a bleſſed reſurrection to eternal life and happineſs in another world? To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. *Amen.*

SERMON XLVI.

Concerning the incarnation of Chriſt.

Preached in the church of St. Lawrence-Jewry, December 28. 1680.

JOHN i. 14.

The Word was made fleſh.

The fourth ſermon on this text.

III. THE third and laſt thing which I propoſed upon this argument, of the incarnation of the Son of God, was, to give ſome account of this diſpenſation, and to ſhew that the wiſdom of God thought fit thus to order things, in great condeſcenſion to the weakneſs and common prejudices of mankind; and that, when all things are duly weighed and conſidered, it will appear much more for our comfort and advantage, than any other way which the wiſdom of men would have been moſt apt to deviſe and pitch upon.

And it is the more neceſſary to give ſome account of this matter, becauſe, after all that hath hitherto been ſaid in anſwer to the objections againſt it, it may ſtill ſeem very ſtrange to a conſidering man, that God, who could, without all this circumſtance and condeſcenſion, have done the buſineſs for which his Son came into the world, and appeared in our nature; that is, could have given the ſame laws to mankind, and have offered to us the forgiveneſs of our ſins, and eternal life, upon our repentance for ſins paſt, and a ſincere endeavour of obedience for the future: I ſay, that notwithſtanding this, he

he ſhould yet make choice of this way for the redemption and recovery of fallen man, by ſending his Son in our nature to accompliſh this deſign.

And, in the handling of this argument, I ſhall, as I ſaid before, all along take the expreſs declarations, or at leaſt the pregnant intimations of ſcripture for my ground and guide; it being always ſafeſt to take the reaſons of the divine counſels and actions from God himſelf. And, in the

Firſt place, I make no manner of doubt to ſay, that it would be a great preſumption and boldneſs in any man to affirm, that the infinite wiſdom of God could not have brought about the ſalvation of men by any other way, than by this very way in which he hath done it. For why ſhould we take upon us to ſet limits to infinite wiſdom, and pretend to know the utmoſt extent of it? But ſince God hath been pleaſed to pitch upon this way rather than any other, this ſurely ought to be reaſon enough to ſatisfy us of the peculiar wiſdom and fitneſs of it, whether the particular reaſons of it appear to us or not.

And yet it cannot be denied to be a very noble argument, and well worthy our conſideration, to inquire into the reaſons of this diſpenſation, and to aſſign them particularly, if we can. For I look upon myſteries and miracles in religion to be much of the ſame nature; and that a great reverence is due to both where they are certain, and neceſſary in the nature and reaſon of the thing; but neither of them are eaſily to be admitted, without neceſſity and very good evidence.

Secondly, I conſider, in the next place, that, in the ſeveral revelations which God hath made of himſelf to mankind, he hath, with great condeſcenſion, accommodated himſelf, both as to the manner and degree of them, to the condition and capacity, and other circumſtances of the perſons and people to whom they were made.

Particularly we find, that the diſpenſation of God towards the Jewiſh nation was full of condeſcenſion to the temper, and prejudice, and other circumſtances of that people. For the religion and laws which God gave them, were far from being the beſt and moſt perfect in themſelves: in which ſenſe ſome underſtand that paſſage

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in the Prophet Ezekiel, where it is ſaid, that God *gave them ſtatutes which were not good*; that is, very imperfect in compariſon of what he could and would have given them, had they been capable of them; and yet ſuch as were very well ſuited and fitted to their preſent capacity and circumſtances.

Thirdly, I obſerve yet further, that though the chriſtian religion, as to the main and ſubſtance of it, be a moſt perfect inſtitution, being the law of nature revived and perfected; yet, upon a due conſideration of things, it cannot be denied, that the manner and circumſtances of this diſpenſation are full of condeſcenſion to the weakneſs of mankind, and very much accommodated to the moſt common and deeply radicated prejudices of men concerning God and religion; and peculiarly fitted to remove and root them out of the minds of men, by ſubſtituting ſomething in the place of them, of as near a compliance with them, as was conſiſtent with the honour of almighty God, and the great deſign of the chriſtian religion.

It is not eaſy to give a certain account of the true original of ſome notions and prejudices concerning God and religion, which have generally obtained in the world, in that variety of religions, and the different ways of worſhip and ſuperſtition which have been in ſeveral nations of the earth. But, in hiſtory and fact, this is certain, that ſome notions, and thoſe very groſs and erroneous, did almoſt univerſally prevail, even among thoſe who did extremely differ in the particular forms and modes of their ſuperſtition.

And though ſome of theſe were much more tolerable than others, yet God ſeems to have had great conſideration of ſome very weak and groſs apprehenſions of mankind concerning religion. And as, in ſome of the laws given by Moſes, God was pleaſed particularly to conſider the hardneſs of the hearts of that people; ſo he ſeems likewiſe to have very much ſuited the diſpenſation of the goſpel, and the method of our ſalvation, by the incarnation and ſufferings of his Son, to the common prejudices of mankind, eſpecially of the heathen world, whoſe minds were leſs prepared for this diſpenſation than the Jews, if we conſider the light and advantages

which the Jewish nation had above the gentile world that so, by this means and method, he might wean ther by degrees from their gross conceptions of things, an rectify more easily their wrong apprehensions, by grati fying them in some measure, and in a gracious com pliance with our weakness, by bending and accommc dating the way and method of our salvation to our wea capacity, and imperfect conceptions of things.

Fourthly, And that God hath done this in the dispen sation of the gospel, will, I think, very plainly appea in the following instances: in most of which I shall b very brief, and only insist somewhat more largely upo the last of them.

1. The world was much given to admire mysteries i religion. The Jews had theirs; several of which, b God's own appointment, were reserved and kept secr in a great measure from the people; others were adde by the superstition of after ages, and held inequal, or r ther greater veneration than the former. And the he then likewise had theirs; the devil always affecting t imitate God so far as served his wicked and malicious d sign of seducing mankind into idolatry, and the worsh of himself; and therefore the scripture always speaks the heathen idolatry, as the worship of devils, and n of God. So that almost every nation had their peculi and celebrated mysteries; most of which were either ve odd and fantastical, or very lewd and impure, or very i humane and cruel, and every way unworthy of the Deit

But the great mystery of the christian religion, the i carnation of the Son of God, or, as the Apostle calls *God manifested in the flesh*, was such a mystery, as, for tl greatness and wonderfulness, for the infinite mercy ar condescension of it, did obscure and swallow up all oth mysteries: for which reason the Apostle, in allusion the heathen mysteries, and in contempt of them, speal ing of the great mystery of the christian religion, say 1 Tim. iii. 16. *Without controversy, great is the mystery godliness: God was manifested in the flesh*, &c. Since tl world had such an admiration for mysteries, he insta ceth in that which was a mystery indeed; a mystery b yond all dispute, and beyond all comparison.

2. There was likewise a great inclination, in mankir

to the worship of a visible and sensible Deity. And this was a main root and source of the various idolatries in the heathen world. Now, to take men off from this, God was pleased to appear in our nature, that they who were so fond of a visible Deity, might have one to whom they might pay divine worship without danger of idolatry, and without injury to the divine nature; even a true and natural image of God the Father, the fountain of the Deity; or, as the Apostle to the Hebrews describes the Son of God, the resplendency or *brightness of his Father's glory, and the express* character or *image of his person*, Heb. i. 2.

3. Another notion which had generally obtained among mankind, was, concerning the expiation of the sins of men, and appeasing the offended Deity, by sacrifice; upon which they supposed the punishment due to the sinner was transferred, to exempt him from it; especially by the sacrifices of men, which had almost universally prevailed in the gentile world.

And this notion of the expiation of sin by sacrifices of one kind or other, seems to have obtained very early in the world; and, among all other ways of divine worship, to have found the most universal reception in all times and places. And indeed, a great part of the Jewish religion and worship was a plain condescension to the general apprehensions of men concerning this way of appeasing the Deity by sacrifice. And the greatest part of the pagan religion and worship was likewise founded upon the same notion and opinion; which, because it was so universal, seems to have had its original from the first parents of mankind, either immediately after the creation, or after the flood; and from thence, I mean as to the substance of this notion, to have been derived and propagated to all their posterity.

And with this general notion of mankind, whatever the ground and foundation of it might be, God was pleased so far to comply, as once for all to have a general atonement made for the sins of all mankind by the sacrifice of his only Son, whom his wise providence did permit, *by wicked hands, to be crucified and slain.* But I shall not at present insist any further upon this, which requires

a particular discourse by itself, and may by God's assistance in due time have it.

4. Another very common notion, and very rife in the heathen world, and a great source of their idolatry, was their apotheoses, or canonizing of famous and eminent persons, who in their lifetime had done great things, and some way or other been great benefactors to mankind, by advancing them after their death to the dignity of an inferior kind of gods, fit to be worshiped by men here on earth, and to have their prayers and supplications addressed to them, as proper and powerful mediators and intercessors for them with the superior gods. To these they gave the titles of *heroes* and *semi-dei*, that is, half-gods; though the notion of a being that is just half infinite, seems to me very hard to be conceived and defined.

Now, to take men off from this kind of idolatry, and to put an end to it, behold one in our nature *exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high*, to be worshipped by men and angels; one that was the truly great benefactor of mankind; one that *was dead, and is alive again, and lives for ever more, to make intercession for us*.

5. To give but one instance more, which I have already intimated: The world was mightily bent upon addressing their requests and supplications, not to the Deity immediately, because their superstition thought that too great a presumption, but by some mediators between the gods and men, who might with advantage, in this humble manner, present their requests, so as to find acceptance. To this end they made use of the demons or angels, and of their heroes, or deified men, whom I mentioned before, by whom they put up their prayers to the supreme gods; hoping, by their intercession, and patronage of their cause, to obtain a gracious answer of them.

In a gracious compliance with this common apprehension, and thereby more easily and effectually to extirpate this sort of idolatry, which had been so long and so generally practised in the world, God was pleased to constitute and appoint one in our nature to be a perpetual advocate and intercessor in heaven for us, to offer

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up our prayers to God his Father, and to *obtain mercy for us, and grace to help in time of need.*

And for ever to take us off from all other mediators; we are expreſsly told in ſcripture, that as there is but one God to whom we are to pray, ſo there is but *one Mediator between God and men, the man Chriſt Jeſus*, 1 Tim. ii. 5. by whom we are to offer up our prayers to God; and that we need not look out for any other, ſince the Apoſtle to the Hebrews tells us, that he *is able to ſave to the uttermoſt all thoſe that come to God by him, ſeeing he lives for ever to make interceſſion for us*, Heb. vii. 25.

And for this reaſon the church of Rome is altogether inexcuſable in this point, for introducing more mediators and interceſſors, more patrons and advocates in heaven for us; and this not only without any neceſſity; for who can add any virtue and efficacy to the powerful and prevalent interceſſion of the Son of God? but likewiſe in direct contradiction to the expreſs conſtitution and appointment of God himſelf; who ſays, there is *but one Mediator between God and men*; and they ſay there ought to be many more, not only the bleſſed virgin, but all the ſaints and angels in heaven. Beſides that by this very thing they revive one notorious piece of the old pagan idolatry, which God ſo plainly deſigned to extinguiſh, by appointing *one* only *Mediator between God and men*.

By this condeſcenſion likewiſe God hath given us the comfortable aſſurance of a moſt powerful and a perpetual interceſſor at the right hand of God in our behalf. For if we conſider Chriſt as man, and of the ſame nature with us, *bone of our bone, and fleſh of our fleſh*; ſo very nearly allied and related to us, we may eaſily believe, that he hath a moſt tender care and concernment for us; that he ſincerely wiſheth our happineſs, and will by all means ſeek to procure it, if we ourſelves, by our own wilful obſtinacy, do not hinder it, and *reſiſt* the kindneſs and *the counſel of God againſt ourſelves*. For if we be reſolved to continue impenitent, there is no help for us. we muſt die in our ſins, and ſalvation itſelf cannot ſave us.

But to proceed: It cannot ſurely but be matter of greateſt conſolation to us, that *the man Chriſt Jeſus*, who is now ſo *highly exalted at the right hand of God*, and

who hath *all power in heaven and earth committed to him*, is our patron and advocate in heaven to plead our cauſe with God; ſince we cannot but think, that he who was pleaſed to become brother to us all, does bear a true affection and good-will to us; and that he who aſſumed our nature, will heartily eſpouſe our cauſe, and plead it powerfully for us, and will with all poſſible advantage recommend our petitions and requeſts to God.

But then if we conſider further, that he did not only take our nature, but likewiſe took our infirmities, and bore them many years, in which he had long and continual experience of the ſaddeſt ſufferings to which human nature is ſubject in this world, and *was tempted in all things like as we are*; this gives us ſtill greater aſſurance, that he who ſuffered and was tempted himſelf, cannot but be touched with a lively ſenſe of our infirmities, and muſt have learned by his own ſufferings to compaſſionate ours, and to be ready to ſuccour us when we are tempted, and to afford us grace and help ſuitable to all our wants and infirmities: for nothing gives us ſo juſt a ſenſe of the ſufferings of others, as the remembrance of our own, and the bitter experience of the like ſufferings and temptations in ourſelves.

And this the Apoſtle to the Hebrews doth very particularly inſiſt upon, as matter of greateſt comfort and encouragement to us, that the Son of God did not only aſſume our nature, *but was made in all things like unto us*, and, during his abode here upon earth, did ſuffer, and *was tempted like as we are: for verily* (ſays the Apoſtle, Heb. ii. 16. 17. 18.) *he took not on him the nature of angels; but the ſeed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren; that he might be a merciful and faithful high-prieſt in things pertaining to God: for in that he himſelf ſuffered, being tempted, he is able to ſuccour them that are tempted.*

And again, exhorting the Jews, who were newly converted to Chriſtianity, to continue *ſtedfaſt in their profeſſion*, notwithſtanding all the ſufferings to which upon that account they were expoſed, he comforts them with this conſideration, that we have at the right hand of God ſo powerful an advocate and interceſſor for us, as the Son of God, who is ſenſible of our caſe, having ſuffered the

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ſame things himſelf; and therefore we cannot doubt of his compaſſion to us, and readineſs to ſupport us in the like ſufferings: *Seeing then* (ſays he, Heb. iv. 14. 15. 16.) *that we have a great high prieſt, that is paſſed into the heavens, Jeſus the Son of God, let us hold faſt our profeſſion. For we have not an high prieſt which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without ſin.* From whence he concludes, that having ſuch an interceſſor, we may with great confidence and aſſurance addreſs our ſupplications to God for his mercy and help, in all our wants and weakneſs, to ſupply the one, and to aſſiſt the other: *Let us therefore* (ſays he) *come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need*; χάριν εἰς εὔκαιρον βοήθειαν, *grace for ſeaſonable relief.*

So that our bleſſed Saviour and Redeemer, now that he is advanced to heaven, and exalted to the right hand of God, is not unmindful of us in this height of his glory and greatneſs; but, with the tendereſt affection and compaſſion to mankind, doth ſtill proſecute the deſign of our ſalvation; and, in virtue of his meritorious obedience and ſufferings, which he preſents to God continually, he offers up our prayers to him, and pleads our cauſe with him, and repreſents to him all our wants and neceſſities, and procures for us a favourable anſwer of our prayers, and ſupplies of grace and ſtrength proportionable to our temptations and infirmities.

And thus, by virtue of this prevalent interceſſion of his with God for us, our ſins are forgiven and our wants ſupplied, and our requeſts granted, and the gracious aſſiſtence and ſupports of God's Holy Spirit are ſeaſonably afforded to us, and we are *kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto ſalvation.* In a word, all thoſe bleſſings and benefits are procured for us by his interceſſion in heaven, which he purchaſed for us by his blood upon earth.

So that in this method of our ſalvation, beſides many other gracious condeſcenſions which God hath made to the weakneſs and prejudices of mankind, our bleſſed Saviour hath perfectly ſupplied the two great wants concerning which mankind was at ſo great a loſs before, namely, the want of an effectual expiatory ſacrifice for

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ſin upon earth, and of a prevalent mediator and interceſſor with God in heaven.

And he hath, in great goodneſs and condeſcenſion to our inveterate prejudices concerning theſe things, taken effectual care fully to ſupply both theſe wants, having *appeared in the end of the world to take away ſin by the ſacrifice of himſelf*; and, in virtue of that ſacrifice, *appearing* now *in heaven in the preſence of God for us*, he is become our perpetual advocate, and a moſt prevalent interceſſor with God in our behalf.

For, inſtead of the various and endleſs ſacrifices of the Jews and Heathens, the Son of God *hath, by one ſacrifice for ſins, perfected for ever them that are ſanctified*: and, inſtead of the mediation of demons and heroes, to offer up our prayers to God, which were the interceſſors made uſe of among the heathen, we have *one Mediator between God and men*, appointed by God himſelf, even the Son of God, who *is entered into heaven itſelf, there to appear in the preſence of God for us*. And to aſſure us that he commiſerates our caſe, and hath a true and tender ſenſe of our infirmities and ſufferings, the very manner of his interceſſion for us, as the ſcripture repreſents it to us, is a plain demonſtration of the thing: for he interceeds for us in heaven, by repreſenting to God his Father his ſufferings upon earth, and pleading them in our behalf. So that the very argument which he uſeth to God for us, cannot but ſtir up compaſſion in him towards us; and whilſt he repreſents his own ſufferings in our behalf, we cannot think that he is unmindful and inſenſible of ours.

You ſee then, that, in this diſpenſation of God for our ſalvation, by ſending his Son in our nature, things are not only ſuited in great condeſcenſion to our apprehenſions, but are likeways, in great compaſſion to us, every way fitted for our comfort and encouragement. God hath made him our great patron and advocate, who was our ſacrifice and propitiation. And ſurely we have all the reaſon in the world to believe, that he who *in the days of his fleſh humbled himſelf, and became obedient to the death* for our ſakes, will be ready to do us all good offices, now that he is advanced to the right hand of God; that he who died for us upon earth, now that he lives

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again, will make interceſſion for us in heaven, and perfect that ſalvation which he purchaſed for us upon the croſs.

And therefore we find in ſcripture, that as the purchaſing of our ſalvation is aſcribed to the death and ſufferings of Chriſt, ſo the perfecting of it is attributed to his interceſſion for us at the right hand of his Father: *Wherefore* (ſays the apoſtle to the Hebrews) *he is able to ſave to the uttermoſt all thoſe that come to God by him, ſeeing he liveth for ever to make interceſſion for us.* He died once to purchaſe theſe benefits, but *he lives for ever* to procure them for us, and to apply them to us. And now that he is in heaven, he is as intent upon our concernments, and lays our happineſs as much to heart, as when he dwelt here among us on earth, and poured out his blood a ſacrifice for ſin upon the croſs. And that, when he lived here below, he ſuffered, and was tempted as we are; this very conſideration gives us the greateſt aſſurance poſſible, that he is ſtill touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and hath a lively ſenſe of our ſufferings; and conſequently, that he doth compaſſionate our caſe, and will uſe all his power and intereſt for our advantage, for our ſeaſonable ſupport and ſuccour in all our trials and ſufferings. But, beſides the wonderful condeſcenſion of this diſpenſation, there is likeways, in the

Fifth and laſt place, a great congruity and fitneſs in the thing itſelf; and this method of our ſalvation, which the wiſdom of God hath pitched upon, is in many other reſpects very much for our real benefit and comfort. For by this means we have a perfect and familiar example of holineſs and obedience in our own nature; by which we plainly ſee, that God requires nothing of us, but what he himſelf, when he ſubmitted to become man, did think fit to do; for being *made of a woman*, he was of neceſſity *made under the law*; and by aſſuming human nature, he became naturally ſubject to the laws and conditions of his being.

And here likeways is a proviſion made for the expiation and forgiveneſs of our ſins, in a way not only very honourable to the juſtice of God, and the authority of his laws, but likeways very effectual to diſcountenance ſin, and to deter men from it; ſince God did not think fit

fit to forgive the sins of men without great sufferings, and that in our nature. For though God was willing to save the sinner, yet rather than encouragement should be given to sin, by letting it go unpunished, he was contented to give up the *dearly beloved of his soul* to be *a sacrifice and propitiation for the sins of the whole world.*

By the same means also we have a most powerful antidote against the fear of suffering, and particularly against the fear of death, one of the greatest slaveries of human nature. So also the Apostle to the Hebrews tells us, chap. ii. 14. 15. that for this cause Christ *himself also took part of flesh and blood, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them, who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*

Again, we have hereby full assurance of a blessed immortality in another life, because in our nature death and all the powers of darkness were baffled and overcome. The death of Christ, which could not have been without his incarnation, and so likeways his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into heaven, are sensible demonstrations to all mankind, of a blessed immortality after death; which is the most powerful motive in the world to obedience and a holy life.

And, lastly, we may, upon this account, promise to ourselves a fair and equal trial at the judgment of the great day, because we shall then be judged by a man like ourselves. Our Saviour and judge himself hath told us, that for this reason *God hath committed all judgment to the Son, because he is the Son of man,* John v. 22. 27. And this in human judgments is accounted a great privilege, to be judged by those who are of the same rank and condition with ourselves, and who are likely to understand best, and most carefully to examine and consider all our circumstances, and to tender our case as if it were their own.

So equitably doth God deal with us, that we shall be acquitted or condemned by such a judge, as, according to human measures, we ourselves should have chosen; by one in our own nature, who *was made in all things like unto us,* that only excepted which would have rendered him incapable of being our judge, because it would have

have made him a criminal like ourſelves. And therefore the Apoſtle offers this as a firm ground of aſſurance to us that *God will judge the world in righteouſneſs*, becauſe this judgment ſhall be adminiſtred by a man like ourſelves: *He hath* (ſaith he) *appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, by that man whom he hath ordained*, &c.

I ſhall now only make a practical inference or two from what hath been delivered upon this argument, and ſo conclude this whole diſcourſe.

1. The ſerious conſideration of what hath been ſaid concerning the incarnation of our bleſſed Saviour, ſhould effectually prevail with us to comply with the great end and deſign of the Son of God's becoming man, and *dwelling amongſt us*, and of his doing and ſuffering all thoſe things which are recorded of him in the hiſtory of his life and death written by the holy Evangeliſts; I ſay, the conſideration hereof ſhould perſuade us all to comply with the great deſign of all this, which is the reformation of mankind, and the recovery of us out of that ſinful and miſerable eſtate into which we were fallen; becauſe the ſalvation which the Son of God hath purchaſed for us, and which he offers to us by the goſpel, is not to be accompliſhed and brought about any other way than by our forſaking our ſins, and reforming our lives. *The grace of God, which hath appeared to all men, and brings ſalvation*, will not make us partakers of it in any other way, nor by any other means, than by *teaching us to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world.* God *ſent his Son* Jeſus *to bleſs us, by turning us away every one from his iniquities:* and unleſs this change be effectually wrought in us, we are utterly incapable of all the bleſſings of the goſpel of Chriſt. All that he hath done for us, without us will avail us nothing; unleſs we be inwardly transformed and *renewed in the ſpirit of our minds*; unleſs we become new creatures; unleſs we make it the continual and ſincere endeavour of our lives to *keep the commandments of God.*

For the ſcripture is moſt expreſs and poſitive in this matter, Heb. xii. 14. that *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord:* 1 John iii. 3. that *every man that hath this hope*

hope in him, that is, in Chriſt, to be ſaved by him, muſt *purify himſelf, even as he is pure*. We do not rightly and truly believe that *Jeſus Chriſt came into the world to ſave ſinners*, if we be not alſo thoroughly convinced, that it is as neceſſary for us to leave our ſins, as to believe this moſt faithful and credible ſaying.

The obedience and ſufferings of our bleſſed Saviour are indeed *accounted to us for righteouſneſs*, and will moſt certainly redound to our unſpeakable benefit and advantage, upon our performance of the condition which the goſpel doth require on our part, namely, that *every man that names the name of Chriſt, depart from iniquity:* and the grace of God's Holy Spirit is ready to enable us to perform this condition, if we earneſtly ask it, and do ſincerely co-operate with it: provided we do what we can on our part, God will not be wanting to us on his. But if we *receive the grace of God in vain*, and take no care to perform the condition, and do neglect to implore the grace and aſſiſtance of God's holy Spirit to that purpoſe, we have none to blame but ourſelves; becauſe it is then wholly our own fault, if we fall ſhort of that happineſs which Chriſt hath purchaſed and promiſed to us upon ſuch eaſy and reaſonable conditions as the goſpel propoſeth.

But I no where find that God hath promiſed to force happineſs upon the negligent, and a reward upon *the wicked and ſlothful ſervant*. A gift may be given for nothing, but ſurely a reward does in the very nature of it always ſuppoſe ſome ſervice. None but *a righteous man* is capable of *a righteous man's reward*: and St. John hath ſufficiently cautioned us not to think ourſelves righteous, anleſs we be doers of righteouſneſs: *Little children*, (ſays he, 1 John iii. 7.) *let no man deceive you: he that doth righteouſneſs, is righteous, even as he is righteous*. This is ſo very plain a text, that if men were not either very eaſy to be deceived by others, or very willing to deceive themſelves, they could not poſſibly miſtake the meaning of it; and therefore I will repeat it once more: *Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doth righteouſneſs, is righteous, even as he is righteous.*

2. The other inference which I would make from the precedent diſcourſe, is this, That with all poſſible thankfulneſs

fulness we should acknowledge and adore the wonderful goodness and condescension of Almighty God, in sending his *only begotten Son* into the world in our nature, to be *made flesh*, and to *dwell amongst us*, in order to our recovery and salvation: A method and dispensation, not only full of mercy and goodness, but of great condescension to our meanness, and of mighty virtue and efficacy for our redemption, and deliverance from the guilt and dominion of sin; and upon all accounts every way so much for our benefit and advantage: so that well may we say, with St. Paul, *This is a faithful saying,* πιστὸς λόγος, *a credible word, and worthy of all acceptation,* (that is, fit to be embraced and entertained with all possible joy and thankfulness,) *that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.*

What an everlasting fountain of the most invaluable blessings and benefits to mankind is the incarnation of the Son of God; his vouchsafing to assume our nature, and to reside and converse so long with us? And what are we, that the eternal and *only begotten Son of God* should condescend to do all this for us? That the high and glorious Majesty of heaven should stoop down to the earth, and be contented to be clothed with misery and mortality? that he should submit to so poor and low a condition, to such dreadful and disgraceful sufferings for our sakes? For what are we? vile and despicable creatures, guilty and unworthy offenders and apostates, enemies and rebels. Blessed God! how great is thy goodness? how infinite are thy tender mercies and compassions to mankind? that thou shouldst regard us whilst we neglected thee, and remember us in our low condition, when we had *forgotten thee days without number*; and shouldst take such pity on us, when we shewed none to ourselves; and whilst we were thy declared and implacable enemies, shouldst express more kindness and goodwill to us, than the best of men ever did to their best friends?

When we reflect seriously upon those great things which God hath done in our behalf, and consider that mighty salvation which God hath wrought for us; what thanks can we possibly render? what acknowledgments shall we ever be able to make, I do not say equal, but

in any ways meet and becoming, to this great benefactor of mankind; who, when we had so highly offended and provoked him, and so foolishly and so fatally undone ourselves; when we were become so guilty and so miserable, and so much fitter to have eternally been the objects of his wrath and indignation, than of his pity and compassion, was pleased to send his own, his only Son into the world, to *seek and save us*; and by him to repair all our ruins, to *forgive all our iniquities*, to *heal all our spiritual diseases, and to crown us with loving-kindness and tender mercies?*

And what sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving should we also offer up to this gracious and most merciful Redeemer of ours, the everlasting Son of the Father, who debased himself so infinitely for our sakes, and when he took upon him to deliver man, did not abhor the virgin's womb; who was contented to be born so obscurely, and to live all his life in a poor and persecuted condition; and was pleased both to undergo and to overcome the sharpness of death, that he might open the kingdom of heaven to all believers?

Every time we have occasion to meditate upon this, especially when we are communicating at his holy table, and receiving the blessed symbols and pledges of his precious death and passion; how should *our hearts burn within us*, and leap for joy? How should the remembrance of it revive and raise our spirits, and put us into an ecstasy of love and gratitude to this great friend and lover of souls? and, with the blessed mother of our Lord, how should *our souls*, upon that blessed occasion, *magnify the Lord, and our spirits rejoice in God our Saviour?*

The holy men of old were transported with joy at the obscure and confused apprehension and remote foresight of so great a blessing, at so great a distance. It is said of Abraham, *the father of the faithful*, that *he saw his day afar off, and was glad.* How should we then be affected with joy and thankfulness, to whom the Son of God and blessed Saviour of men is actually come? He is come many ages ago, and hath enlightened a great part of the world with his glory. Yea, he is come to us, who were in a manner separated from the rest of the world.

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To us is this great light come, who had so long *sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death*; and this mighty salvation which he hath wrought for us, is near to every one of us that is willing to lay hold of it, and to accept it upon those gracious terms and conditions upon which it is offered to us in his holy gospel.

And by his coming he hath delivered mankind from that gross ignorance and *thick darkness which covered the nations. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding to know him that is true: and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life*, 1 John v. 20. 21. and then it immediately follows, *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.* What can be the meaning of this caution? and what is the connexion of it with the foregoing discourse? It is plainly this, That the Son of God, by his coming, had rescued mankind from the sottish worship of idols; and therefore he cautions Christians to take great heed of relapsing into idolatry by worshipping a creature, or the image and likeness of any creature, instead of God. And because he foresaw that it might be objected to Christians, as in fact it was afterwards by the Heathen, that the worship of Christ, who was a man, was as much idolatry as that which the Christians charged the Heathen withal; therefore St. John, effectually to prevent the force of this plausible objection, though he perpetually, throughout his gospel, declares Christ to be really a man, yet he expressly also affirms him to be God, and *the true God*; and consequently, Christians might safely pay divine worship to him, without fear or danger of idolatry: *We are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*

But this I am sensible is a digression, yet such a one as may not be altogether useless.

To proceed then in the recital of those great blessings which the coming of the Son of God hath brought to mankind: He hath rescued us from the bondage of sin, and from the slavery of Satan: he hath openly proclaimed pardon and reconciliation to the world: he hath clearly revealed eternal life to us, which was but obscure-

ly made known before, both to Jews and Gentles; *but is now made manifeſt by the appearance of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, who hath aboliſhed death, and brought life and immortality to light by the goſpel.* He hath purchaſed this great bleſſing for us, and is ready to confer it upon us, if we will be contented to leave our ſins, and to be ſaved by him: a condition, without which, as ſalvation is not to be had, ſo, if it were, it would not be deſirable, it could not make us happy; becauſe our ſins would ſtill ſeparate between God and us, and the guilt and horror of our own minds would make us eternally miſerable.

And now, ſurely, we cannot but thus judge, that all the praiſes and acknowledgments, all the ſervice and obedience which we can poſſibly render to him, are infinitely beneath thoſe infinite obligations which the Son of God hath laid upon the ſons of men, by his *coming into the world to ſave ſinners.*

What then remains, but that at all times, and more eſpecially at this ſeaſon, we gratefully acknowledge and joyfully commemorate this great and amazing goodneſs of God to us, in the incarnation of his Son for the redemption and ſalvation of the ſinful and miſerable race of mankind? A method and diſpenſation of the divine grace and wiſdom, not only full of mercy and condeſcenſion, but of great power and virtue to purify our hearts, and to reform our lives; to beget in us a fervent love of God our Saviour, and a perfect hatred and deteſtation of our ſins, and a ſtedfaſt purpoſe and reſolution to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking in his ways all the days of our life: in a word, a method that is every way calculated for our unſpeakable benefit and comfort.

Since then the Son of God hath ſo graciouſly condeſcended to be *made in all things like unto us, ſin only excepted*, let us aſpire to be as like to him as is poſſible, in the exemplary holineſs and virtues of his life. We cannot be like him in his miracles, but we may in his mercy and compaſſion: we cannot imitate his divine power, but we may reſemble him in his innocency and humility, in his meekneſs and patience. And as he aſſumed human nature, ſo let us reaſſume humanity, which

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we have in a great measure depraved and put off; and let us *put on bowels of mercy* towards those that are in misery, and be ready to relieve the poor for his sake, *who being rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.*

To conclude: Let us imitate him in that which was his great work and business here upon earth, and which of all other did best become the Son of God: I mean, in his *going about doing good*, that, by *giving glory to God in the highest*, and by endeavouring, as much as in us lies, to procure and promote *peace on earth, and good-will amongst men*, we may at last be *made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*, through the mercies and merits of our blessed Saviour and Redeemer. *Amen.*

" Almighty God, who hast given us thy only begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and as at this time to be born of a pure virgin, grant, that we being regenerate, and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit, through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit, ever one God, world without end. *Amen.*"

SERMON XLVII.

Concerning the sacrifice and satisfaction of Christ, &c.

HEB. ix. 26.

But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared, to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

AMong many other great ends and reasons for which God was pleased to send his Son into the world to dwell amongst us, this was one of the chief, that, by a long course of the greatest innocency and the greatest sufferings in our nature, he might be capable to make a

perfect expiation of sin: *But now once in the end of the world, ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων, in the conclusion of the ages,* (that is, in the last age of the world, which is the gospel-age,) *hath he appeared to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*

The general design of God in sending his Son into the world, was to save mankind from eternal death and misery, and to purchase for us eternal life and happiness. So the author of our salvation himself tells us, John iii. 16. that *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

Now, in order to the procuring of this salvation for us, the impediments and hindrances of it were to be removed. These were, the guilt, and the dominion of sin. By the guilt of sin we were become obnoxious to the wrath of God, and to eternal condemnation; and by the defilement and dominion of it we were incapable of the happiness of heaven, and the reward of eternal life.

To remove these two great hindrances, two things were necessary; the forgiveness of sins past, in order to our deliverance from the wrath of God, and the eternal torments of the next life; and the reformation of our hearts and lives, to make us capable of eternal life and happiness in another world. And both these, if God had so pleased, might, for any thing we certainly know to the contrary, have been effected by the abundant mercy and powerful grace of God, without this wonderful method and dispensation, of sending his Son in our nature *to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself.* But it seems the wisdom of God thought fit to pitch upon this way and method of our salvation; and no doubt for very good reasons; amongst which these three seem to be very obvious, and very considerable.

1. To vindicate the honour of his laws, which, if sin had gone altogether unpunished, would have been in great danger of falling into contempt. For if God had proclaimed a general pardon of sin to all mankind, without any testimony of his wrath and displeasure against it, Who would have had any great veneration for his laws; or have believed in good earnest, that the violation

lation of them had either been so extremely offensive to him, or so very dangerous to the sinner?

Therefore, to maintain the honour of his laws, rather than sin should pass unpunished, God would lay the punishment of it upon his only begotten Son, the dearest person to him in the world; which is a greater testimony of his high displeasure against sin, and of his tender regard and concernment for the honour of his laws, than if the sinner had suffered the punishment due to it in his own person.

2. Another reason of this dispensation, and that likewise very considerable, was, that God might forgive sin in such a way as yet effectually to discountenance and discourage it, and to create in us the greatest horror and hatred of it; which could not have been by an absolute pardon, without any punishment inflicted, or satisfaction made to the honour of his justice. For had sin been so easily forgiven, Who would have been sensible of the great evil of it, or afraid to offend for the future?

But when God makes his own Son a sacrifice, and lays upon him the punishment due for the iniquities of us all, this is a demonstration, that God hates sin as much, if it be possible, as he loved his own Son. For this plainly shews what sin deserves, and what the sinner may justly expect, if, after this severity of God against it, he will venture to commit it.

And if this sacrifice for sin, and the pardon purchased by it, be not effectual to reclaim us from sin, and to beget in us an eternal dread and detestation of it; if we sin wilfully after so clear a revelation of *the wrath of God from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation to consume the adversaries.* For what could God do more to testify his displeasure against sin, and to discountenance the practice of it, than to make his only Son *an offering for sin*, and to give him up to be *wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities*? In what clearer glass can we at once behold the great evil and demerit of sin, and the infinite goodness and mercy of God to sinners, than in the sorrows and sufferings of the Son of God for our sins and for our sakes?

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3. Another reason of this dispensation seems to have been a gracious condescension and compliance of almighty God, with a certain apprehension and persuasion, which had very early and universally obtained among mankind, concerning the expiation of sin, and appeasing the offended Deity, by the sacrifices of living creatures, of birds and beasts; and afterwards by human sacrifices, and the blood of their sons and daughters; by offering to God, as the expression is in the Prophet, *their first-born for their transgression, and the fruit of their body for the sin of their souls.*

And this notion of the expiation of sin by sacrifice, whether it had its first rise from divine revelation, and was afterwards propagated from age to age by tradition; I say, from whence soever this notion came, it hath, of all other notions concerning religion, excepting those of the being of God and his providence, and of the recompences of another life, found the most universal reception; and the thing hath been the most generally practised in all ages and nations, not only in the old, but in the new discovered parts of the world.

And indeed a very great part of the Jewish religion, which was instituted by God himself, seems to have been a plain condescension to the general apprehension of mankind, concerning this way of appeasing the offended Deity by sacrifices; as it was also a figure of that great and efficacious sacrifice which should in due time be offered to God, to make atonement once for all for the sins of all mankind.

And the Apostle to the Hebrews doth very particularly insist upon this condescension of God to them in the dispensation of the gospel. And whereas they apprehended so great a necessity of an High Priest, and of sacrifices, to make expiation for the sins of the people, that it was an established principle among them, that *without shedding of blood there was no remission of sins*, God was pleased to comply so far with these notions and apprehensions of theirs, as to make his own Son both a priest and a sacrifice, to do that once for all, which their own High Priest pretended to do year by year.

And from hence the same Apostle takes occasion to recommend to them the new covenant, and dispensation of

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the gospel, as having a greater and more perfect High Priest, and a more excellent sacrifice, than were the High Priests and the sacrifices under the law; the Son of God *having by one sacrifice of himself obtained eternal redemption for us, and perfected for ever them that are sanctified.*

And this apprehension prevailed no less in the heathen world, and proceeded to the sacrifices of men, even of their first-born. And with this apprehension, not to countenance, but to abolish it, God was pleased to comply so far, as to make a general atonement for the sins of mankind by the death of his Son, appearing in our nature to become a voluntary sacrifice for us: God permitting him to be unjustly put to death, and his blood to be shed by the malice of men, in appearance as a malefactor, but in truth as a martyr; and accepting of his death as a meritorious sacrifice and *propitiation for the sins of the whole world*; that, by this wise counsel and permission of his providence, he might for ever put an end to that barbarous and inhumane way of serving God, which had been so long in use and practice among them: the Son of God by the voluntary sacrifice of himself having effected all that at once, and for ever, which mankind, from the beginning of the world, had in vain been endeavouring to accomplish by innumerable and continual sacrifices; namely, the pardon of their sins, and perfect peace and reconciliation with God.

For these ends and reasons, and perhaps for many more as great and considerable as these, which our shallow understandings are not able to fathom, the wisdom of God hath pitched upon this way and method of delivering mankind from the guilt and dominion of sin by the sacrifice of his Son. And to this end it was requisite, that he should appear in our nature, and dwell amongst us for some considerable time, that, by a long course of the greatest innocency, and of the greatest sufferings in our nature, he might be capable of making a perfect expiation of sin.

So that two things were requisite to qualify him for this purpose; perfect innocency and obedience, and great sufferings in our nature, even to the suffering of death. Both these the scripture declares to be necessary qualifications of a person capable to make expiation of sin; and both

both theſe were found in the perſon of our bleſſed Saviour.

1. Unſpotted innocency and perfect obedience. This the ſcripture teſtifies concerning him, and the whole courſe of his life and actions: *He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without ſin,* ſaith the Apoſtle to the Hebrews, chap. iv. 15. *He always did the things which pleaſed God,* as he teſtifies concerning himſelf, John viii. 29; *and we are ſure that his witneſs is true. He did no ſin, neither was guile found in his mouth,* as St. Peter tells us of him, 1 Pet. ii. 22. And this was neceſſary to qualify him for the perfect expiation of ſin, whether we conſider him as a prieſt, or as a ſacrifice.

As a prieſt, he could not have been fit to make expiation for the ſins of others, had he not been without ſin himſelf. And this, the Apoſtle tells us, is one great advantage of our High Prieſt under the Goſpel, above the High Prieſt under the law, who, being a ſinner himſelf, as well as thoſe for whom he offered, had need to offer for himſelf, before he could make ſo much as a legal expiation for the ſins of others. But a perfect and effectual expiation of ſin, ſo as to purge the conſcience from the guilt of it, cannot be made but by an High Prieſt who is holy and innocent himſelf: *For ſuch an high prieſt* (ſaith the Apoſtle, Heb. vii. 26. 27.) *became us,* (that is, now under the diſpenſation of the goſpel, when a perfect expiation of ſins is to be made, *ſuch an high prieſt* is neceſſary,) *who is holy, harmleſs, undefiled, ſeparate from ſinners; who needeth not, as thoſe high prieſts,* (that is, as the High Prieſts under the law,) *to offer up ſacrifice, firſt for his own ſins, and then for the people's.* The plain force of which argument is this, that he who will be qualified to make atonement for the ſins of others, muſt be without ſin himſelf.

And then, if we conſider Chriſt as a ſacrifice for ſin, perfect holineſs is neceſſary to make a ſacrifice acceptable and available for the expiation of ſin. The neceſſity of this was typified by the quality of the expiatory ſacrifices under the law. The beaſts that were to be offered, were to be *without ſpot and blemiſh.* To which the Apoſtle alludes, ſpeaking of the quality and efficacy of the ſacrifice of Chriſt, Heb. ix. 14. *How much more* (ſays he)

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shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God? And to the same purpose St. Peter, 1 epist. i. 18. 19. *Forasmuch as ye know ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot,* &c.; hereby intimating, that nothing less than the perfect innocency and holiness of him who was to be a sacrifice for us, could have expiated the guilt of our sins, and purchased eternal redemption for us.

2. Great sufferings likewise in our nature, even to the suffering of death, were requisite to the perfect expiation of sin: I say, even to the suffering of death; for the sacrifices which were to make expiation, were to be slain. And it was a constant maxim and principle among the Jews, and the Apostle, more than once in this epistle, seems to allow and confirm it, That *without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.*

Not that God could not have pardoned sin without satisfaction made to his justice, either by the suffering of the sinner himself, or of a sacrifice in his stead: but, according to the method and dispensation which the wisdom of God had pitched upon, he was resolved not to dispense forgiveness in any other way. For which reason he seems either to have possessed mankind with this principle, or to have permitted them to be so persuaded, That sin was not to be expiated but by blood; that is, either by the death of the sinner, or of the sacrifice.

Now, the life of our blessed Saviour, as well as his death, was made up of sufferings of one kind or other; continual sufferings from his cradle to his cross, from the time he drew his first breath, to his giving up the ghost: and not only continual sufferings, but the greatest that ever were; considering the dignity of the person that suffered, and the nature of the sufferings; considering likewise that these sufferings were not only wholly undeserved on his part, but unmerited also on ours, for whose sake he submitted himself to them: nay, on the contrary, he had obliged to the utmost those for whom and by whom he suffered, and continued still to oblige them, by the greatest blessings and benefits purchased

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and procured for them by those very sufferings which with so much malice and cruelty they inflicted on him.

Had our blessed Saviour been a mere man, the perfect innocency and unspotted purity of his whole life; his zeal to do the will of God, and his delight in doing it; his infinite pains and unwearied diligence in *going about doing good*; his constant obedience to God in the most difficult instances; and his perseverance in well-doing, notwithstanding the ill usage and hard measure, the bitter reproaches and persecutions he met withal for it, from a wicked and ill-natured world; his perfect submission to the will of God; his invincible patience under the greatest and bittereſt sufferings, and his infinite charity to his enemies and persecutors: these must needs be highly acceptable to God, and, if man could merit of God, likely enough to be available for the sins of others.

But our Saviour and our sacrifice being the Son of God in our nature; and he voluntarily assuming it, and submitting to the condition of humanity in its lowest and most miserable state, sin only excepted; and his being contented to live a life of doing good and suffering evil, and at last to be put to death, and slain a sacrifice for us: the dignity of the person who did and suffered all this for us, and his dearness to God, must needs add a mighty value to so perfect an obedience, and such patient sufferings, so as to render them a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.

And all this being willingly performed in our nature, and accepted by God as done upon our account, may reasonably be presumed to redound to our benefit and advantage, as much as if we ourselves had performed it in our own persons; nothing being so proper and so available to make an honourable amends and satisfaction to the justice of God for the sins of all mankind, as the voluntary obedience and sufferings of human nature in a person of so great dignity, and dearness to God, as his eternal and entirely beloved Son.

Now, that expiation of sin was made by the sufferings of Christ in our stead, I shall endeavour to make good these three ways.

1. From plain testimonies of holy scripture, declaring this

this matter to us as clearly and fully as it is possible for words to do it.

2. From the nature and intention of expiatory sacrifices, both among the Jews and Heathens; to which the death of Christ is in the New Testament so frequently compared, and, in point of virtue and efficacy to take away sin, infinitely preferred to them.

3. By vindicating this method and dispensation of the divine wisdom, from the objections which are brought against it; and by shewing, that there is nothing in it that is unreasonable, or any ways unworthy of God.

I. I shall produce some plain testimonies of Holy Scripture, which declare this matter as clearly and fully as it is possible for words to do it, namely, that the Son of God, in order to the effectual expiation of sin, suffered in our stead, and bore the wrath of God for us, and made a perfect atonement for sin, and obtained eternal redemption for us.

This the scripture declares to us in great variety of expressions; as, that *Christ died for us*, and *for our sins:* that he was *a sacrifice for us*, and *a propitiation for the sins of the whole world*; that is, of all mankind: that *he bare our sins in his own body on the tree*, and *appeared to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself:* that *we are justified by his blood*, and *redeemed by the price of it.* And in very many other expressions to the same purpose.

And this is so evidently the scope and meaning of these expressions, that it cannot be denied, without offering the greatest violence imaginable to the Holy Scriptures. For can any man think that God would have used so many expressions in scripture, the plain and most obvious sense of all which is, that the Son of God suffered for our sins and in our stead, if this had not been his design and meaning? Would not this be in effect to say, that God had written a great book to puzzle and confound, but not to instruct and teach mankind?

I will at present single out some few of those many texts of scripture which might be produced to this purpose: 2 Cor. v. 21. *He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin*; that is, he hath made him, who had no sin himself, a sacrifice for our sins. Again, Eph. v. 2. *And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath*

given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God. St. Peter to the same purpose tells us, that *Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh*, 1 Pet. iii. 18. Here Christ is said to have *suffered for sin*: and to declare, that the Apostle did not only mean that Christ suffered upon the occasion of our sins, but that he suffered in the place and stead of the sinner, he adds, *the just for the unjust*; that is, the Son of God, who was innocent and had no sin, suffered for us who were sinners; or, as it is elsewhere expressed, *he bare our sins in his own body on the tree.*

It is true indeed, that Christ suffered for our benefit and advantage; which the Socinians would have to be all that is meant in the texts which I have cited: but then it ought to be considered, that Christ's suffering for our benefit and advantage does by no means exclude, nor is any ways inconsistent with his suffering in our stead. For whoever suffers in another man's stead, and to save him from suffering, does undoubtedly suffer for his benefit and advantage, and gives the best demonstration of it that can be. But the manner of the expression, if compared with other parallel texts of scripture, and especially with what is so often said of our Saviour's being a sacrifice, which I shall have occasion further to urge by and by; I say, the manner of the expression, if well considered, will appear to any man that is not contentious, to signify our Saviour's suffering instead of the sinner.

But, not to argue from words and phrases, I will produce two texts which declare this matter so plainly, that the force of them is not to be avoided, without the most shameful wresting and perverting of them. John xv. 12. *This is my commandment*, (says our Saviour) *That ye love one another, as I have loved you.* How is that? he declares in the next words, v. 13. *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend*; that is, that he be contented to die in his stead. And to the same purpose St. Paul, Rom. v. 6. *For when we were yet sinners, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.* Now, the question is, Whether, by this expression of Christ's dying for the ungodly, be meant only his dying for the benefit

benefit and advantage of sinners, but not his dying in their stead? This, let the words which immediately follow determine: v. 7. 8. *For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* And now I appeal to any man of good sense, whether it be not plain, that the Apostle here speaks of Christ's dying for sinners in the same sense as one man is said to die for another: that is, to save another from death; which, what is it else but to die in his stead? He that can deny this, is perverse to the highest degree, and I fear almost beyond the possibility of being convinced.

And the argument from these two texts is so much the stronger, because we do not here reason merely from the phrase and expression, but from the main scope of our Saviour's discourse in the one, and of St. Paul's in the other: for the design of both is, to recommend the superlative love of Christ to us, above the greatest love that ever any man expressed to another. The highest pitch that human affection did ever rise to, was for a man to lay down his life for his friend; but the Son of God laid down his life for his enemies. *Scarcely* (says St. Paul) *would one lay down his life for a righteous man*; that is, for one who is but strictly just and honest, and does no body wrong; but for a good man, that is, for one that is kind and beneficial to all, and hath obliged mankind by great benefits, some one may be found that would lay down his life to save the life of such a person: but the love of Christ hath gone far beyond this; he died for sinners, for those who were neither good men nor righteous: *But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* Now, where doth the force of this argument lie, if not in this, that Christ hath done that for us, who were enemies and sinners, which some very few persons in the world have done for their friend, or for some very eminently good man? And what is that? why they have laid down their lives in their stead. And so Christ hath done for us. This seems to be so very plain, that I do not see how the force of this argument is possible to be avoided.

It is evident then from ſcripture, that Chriſt died, not only for our advantage, but in our ſtead; as truly and really as any man ever did or can die for another, who lays down his own life to ſave another from death. For if Chriſt had not died, we had periſhed everlaſtingly; and becauſe he died, we are ſaved from eternal death and miſery.

And though this be no where in ſcripture ſpoken of by the name or term of *ſatisfaction*, yet it is ſaid to be the price of our redemption; which ſurely is the ſame in effect with ſatisfaction. For as we are ſinners, we are liable, and, as I may ſay, indebted to the juſtice of God; and the Son of God, by his death and ſufferings in our nature, hath diſcharged this obligation, and paid this debt for us. Which diſcharge, ſince it was obtained for us by the ſhedding of Chriſt's blood, and the ſcripture tells us, that *without ſhedding of blood there is no remiſſion of ſins*; and ſince God is graciouſly pleaſed to accept of it for the debt which we owed to his juſtice, and to declare himſelf fully pleaſed and contented with it; why it may not properly enough be called *payment* or *ſatisfaction*, I confeſs I am not able to underſtand. Men may eternally wrangle about any thing; but what a frivolous contention, what a trifling in ſerious matters, what barretry in divinity is this?

Not that God was angry with his Son when he thus *laid on him the iniquities of us all*: no; he was always well pleaſed with him; and never better, than when he *became obedient to death, even the death of the croſs*, and *bore our ſins in his own body on the tree*.

Nor yet that our Saviour ſuffered the very ſame that the ſinner ſhould have ſuffered, namely, the proper pains and torment of the damned; but that his obedience and ſufferings were of that value and eſteem with God, and his voluntary ſacrifice of himſelf ſo well-pleaſing to him, that he thereupon entered into a covenant of grace and mercy with mankind, wherein he hath engaged himſelf to forgive the ſins of thoſe who believe and repent, and to make them partakers of eternal life. And hence the blood of Chriſt, which was ſhed for us upon the croſs, is called *the blood of the covenant*, as being the ſanction of that new covenant into which God is entered with mankind;

kind; and not only the sanction and confirmation of that covenant, but the very foundation of it; for which reason the cup in the Lord's supper is called *the new testament* (or, as the word should rather be rendered, *the new covenant*) *in his blood, which was shed for many for the remission of sins.* I proceed now to the

II. Second thing propounded; which was, to shew that the expiation of our sins was made by the sufferings of Christ, from the nature and intention of expiatory sacrifices, both among the Jews and Heathens; to which the death of Christ is in the New Testament so frequently compared, and, in point of virtue and efficacy to take away sin, infinitely preferred to them.

Now, the nature and design of expiatory sacrifices was plainly this, to substitute one living creature to suffer and die instead of another; so that what the sinner deserved to have suffered, was supposed to be done to the sacrifice; that is, it was slain to make an atonement for the sinner.

And though there was no reason to hope for any such effect from the blood of bulls, or goats, or of any other living creatures that were wont to be offered up in sacrifice; yet that both Jews and Heathens did expect and hope for it, is so very evident, that it cannot, without extreme ignorance or obstinacy, be denied.

But this expectation, how unreasonable soever, plainly shews it to have been the common apprehension of mankind in all ages, that God would not be appeased, nor should sin be pardoned, without suffering: but yet so, that men generally conceived good hopes, that upon the repentance of sinners, God would accept of a vicarious punishment; that is, of the suffering of some other in their stead. And very probably, as I said before, in compliance with this apprehension of mankind, and in condescension to it, as well as for other weighty reasons best known to the divine wisdom, God, was pleased to find out such a sacrifice as should really and effectually procure for them that great blessing of the forgiveness of sins, which they had so long hoped for from the multitude of their own sacrifices.

And the Apostle to the Hebrews doth, in a large discourse, shew the great virtue and efficacy of the sacrifice

of Chriſt, to the purpoſe of remiſſion of ſins, above that of the ſacrifices under the law; and that the death of Chriſt is really and effectually to our advantage all that which the ſacrifices under the law were ſuppoſed to be to the ſinner: *But now once* (ſaith the Apoſtle here in the text) *in the end of the world, hath he appeared to take away ſin by the ſacrifice of himſelf.* This is the great virtue and efficacy of the ſacrifice of Chriſt, that whatever was expected from any other ſacrifices, either by Jews or Heathens, was really effected by this.

This was plainly ſignified by the Jewiſh paſſover, wherein the lamb was ſlain, and the ſinner did eſcape, and was paſſed by. In alluſion whereto St. Paul makes no ſcruple to call Chriſt *our paſſover* or *paſchal lamb*, who was ſlain that we might eſcape: *Chriſt our paſſover* (ſays he, 1 Cor. v. 7.) *is ſlain*, or offered *for us*; that is, he, by the gracious appointment of God, was ſubſtituted to ſuffer all that in our ſtead which the paſchal lamb was ſuppoſed to ſuffer for the ſinner.

And this was likewiſe ſignified by the ſinner's laying his hand upon the ſacrifice that was to be ſlain, thereby, as it were, transferring the puniſhment which was due to himſelf, upon the ſacrifice that was to be ſlain and offered up. For ſo God tells Moſes, that the ſinner, who came to offer an expiatory ſacrifice, ſhould do, Lev. i. 4. *He ſhall put his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering; and it ſhall be accepted for him to make an atonement for him.* And the Apoſtle tells us, that it was an eſtabliſhed principle in the Jewiſh religion, that *without ſhedding of blood there was no remiſſion of ſins.* Which plainly ſhews, that they expected this benefit of the remiſſion of ſins, from the blood of their ſacrifices.

And then he tells us, that we are really made partakers of this benefit by the blood of Chriſt, and by the virtue of his ſacrifice. And again, *Chriſt* (ſays he, Heb. ix. 28.) *was once offered to bear the ſins of many*; plainly alluding to the ſacrifices under the law, which did, as it were, bear the faults of the ſinner.

And that this expreſſion of *Chriſt's being offered to bear our ſins*, cannot be meant of his taking away our ſins by his holy doctrine, which was confirmed by his death, but of his bearing our ſins by way of imputation, and

and by his suffering for them in our stead, as the sacrifice was supposed to do for the sinner: this, I say, is evident beyond all denial, from the opposition which follows after the text, between his first appearance and his second: *Christ* (says our Apostle, v. 28) *was once offered to bear our sins; but unto them that look for him he shall appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation.* Why? did he not appear the first time without sin? Yes, certainly, as to any inherent guilt: for the scripture tells us, *he had no sin.* What then is the meaning of the opposition, that at his first coming *he bore our sins*, but at his second coming *he shall appear, without sin, unto salvation?* These words can have no other imaginable sense but this, that at his first coming he sustained the person of a sinner, and suffered instead of us; but his second coming shall be upon another account, and *he shall appear, without sin, unto salvation*; that is, not as a sacrifice, but as a judge, to confer the reward of eternal life upon those who are partakers of the benefit of that sacrifice which he offered to God for us *in the days of his flesh.* I proceed to the

III. Third thing I proposed, and which yet remains to be spoken to, namely, to vindicate this method and dispensation of the divine wisdom, from the objections which are brought against it; and to shew, that there is nothing in it that is unreasonable, or any ways unworthy of God. I shall mention four objections which are commonly urged in this matter, and I think they are all that are considerable.

1. That this method, of the expiation of sin by the sufferings of Christ, seems to argue some defect and want of goodness in God, as if he needed some external motive, and were not of himself disposed to forgive sinners.

To which I think the answer is not difficult, namely, That God did not want goodness to have forgiven sin freely and without any satisfaction; but his wisdom did not think it meet to give encouragement to sin by too easy a forgiveness, and without some remarkable testimony of his severe displeasure against it: and therefore his greater goodness and compassion to mankind devised this way to save the sinner, without giving the least countenance and encouragement to sin.

For

For God to think of saving us any way, was excessive goodness and mercy; but to think of doing it in this way, by substituting his dearly beloved Son to suffer in our stead, is a condescension so very amazing, that if God had not been pleased of his own goodness to stoop to it, it had almost been blasphemy in man to have thought of it, or desired it.

2. How can our sins be said to have been forgiven freely, if the pardon of them was purchased at so dear a rate, and so mighty a price was paid for it?

In answer to this, I desire these two things may be considered. 1*st*, That it is a wonderful grace and favour of God, to admit of this translation of the punishment which was due to us, and to accept of the sufferings of another in our stead, and for our benefit, when he might justly have exacted it of us in our own persons: so that, even in this respect, we are, as St. Paul says, *justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ*: and freely too, in respect of any necessity that lay upon God to forgive us in this or any other way. It was a free act of his goodness to save us, even by the satisfaction and sufferings of his own Son. 2*dly*, It was in effect freely too, notwithstanding the mighty price which was paid for our redemption: because this price was not of our own procuring, but of God's providing; he *found out this ransom for us*. And will any man say, that a prince who prevails with his son to interceed for the pardon of a rebel, yea and to suffer some punishment, or to pay a fine for the obtaining of it, does not in effect, and in all equitable and grateful construction, forgive him freely?

3. It is yet further objected, That this seems to be more unreasonable than the sacrificing of beasts among the Jews, nay than the sacrificing of men among the Heathen, and even of their own sons and daughters; because this is the offering up of the Son of God, the most innocent and the most excellent person that ever was.

To which I answer, That if we consider the manner and the design of it, the thing will appear to be quite otherways.

As to the manner of it, God did not command his Son

Son to be sacrificed; but his providence permitted the wickedness and violence of men to put him to death; and then his goodness and wisdom did over-rule this worst of actions to the best of ends. And if we consider the matter aright, how is this any more a reflexion upon the holy providence of God, than any enormities and cruelties which by his permission are daily committed in the world?

And then, if we consider the end and design of this permission of Christ's death, and the application of it to the purpose of a general expiation; we cannot but acknowledge, and even adore the gracious and merciful design of it. For by this means God did at once put an end to that unreasonable and bloody way of worship, which had been so long practised in the world; and, after this one sacrifice, which was so infinitely dear to God, the benefit of expiation was not to be expected in any other way; all other sacrifices being worthless and vain in comparison of this: and it hath ever since obtained this effect, of making all other sacrifices to cease, in all parts of the world where Christianity hath prevailed.

4. The last objection is, the injustice and cruelty of an innocent person's suffering instead of the offender.

To this I answer, That they who make so great a noise with this objection, do seem to me to give a full and clear answer to it themselves, by acknowledging, as they constantly and expressly do, that our Saviour suffered all this for our benefit and advantage, though not in our place and stead. For this, to my apprehension, is plainly to give up the cause, unless they can shew a good reason why there is not as much injustice and cruelty in an innocent person's suffering for the benefit and advantage of a malefactor, as in his suffering in his stead. So little do men, in the heat of dispute and opposition, who are resolved to hold fast an opinion in despite of reason and good sense, consider, that they do many times in effect, and by necessary consequence, grant the very thing which in express terms they do so stiffly and pertinaciously deny.

The truth of the matter is this: There is nothing of injustice or cruelty in either case, neither in an innocent person's

perſon's ſuffering for the benefit of an offender, nor in his ſtead, ſuppoſing the ſuffering to be voluntary; but they have equally the ſame appearance of injuſtice and cruelty. Nor can I poſſibly diſcern any reaſon why injuſtice and cruelty ſhould be objected in the one caſe more than in the other; there being every whit as little reaſon why an innocent perſon ſhould ſuffer for the benefit of a criminal, as why he ſhould ſuffer in his ſtead. So that I hope this objection, which above all the reſt hath been ſo loudly and ſo invidiouſly urged, hath received a juſt anſwer.

And I believe, if the matter were ſearched to the bottom, all this perverſe contention about our Saviour's ſuffering for our benefit, but not in our ſtead, will ſignify juſt nothing. For if Chriſt died for our benefit, ſo as ſome way or other, by virtue of his death and ſufferings, to ſave us from the wrath of God, and to procure our eſcape from eternal death; this, for ought I know, is all that any body means by his dying in our ſtead: for he that dies with an intention to do that benefit to another as to ſave him from death, doth certainly, to all intents and purpoſes, die in his place and ſtead.

And if they will grant this to be their meaning, the controverſy is at an end: and both ſides are agreed in the thing, and do only differ in the phraſe and manner of expreſſion; which is to ſeek a quarrel and an occaſion of difference where there is no real ground for it: a thing which ought to be very far from reaſonable and peaceable minds.

For the Socinians ſay, that our Saviour's voluntary obedience and ſufferings did procure his exaltation at the right hand of God, and power and authority to forgive ſins, and to give eternal life to as many as he pleaſed. So that they grant that his obedience and ſufferings, in the meritorious conſequence of them, do redound to our benefit and advantage, as much as we pretend and ſay they do; only they are loth in expreſs terms to acknowledge that Chriſt died in our ſtead: and this for no other reaſon, that I can imagine, but becauſe they have denied it ſo often and ſo long.

But I appeal to the ingenuity of our adverſaries, whether this do not in the laſt iſſue come all to one; and be not,

not, on their part, a mere controversy about words? For suppose a malefactor condemned to some grievous punishment; and the king's son, to save him from it, is contented to submit to great disgrace and sufferings: in reward of which sufferings, the king takes his son into his throne, and sets him at his own right hand, and gives him power to pardon this malefactor, and, upon a fitting submission and repentance, to advance him to honour. Will not any man in this case allow, that the king's son suffered instead of this malefactor; and smile at any man that shall be so nice, as to grant, that indeed he suffered for him, but yet to deny that he was punished for him; to allow that he bore the inconvenience of his faults, but yet obstinately to stand it out, that the faults of this malefactor were not laid upon him, or in any ways so imputed to him, that he can be said to have suffered in his stead? This is just the case; and the difference in reality, and in the last result of things, is nothing but words.

Thus far have I tried your patience in a contentious argument, in which I take no pleasure; but yet shall be glad, if I may be so happy as, by any thing that hath been said, to contribute towards the putting an end to so unhappy a controversy, which hath troubled the world so long, and raised such a dust, that very few have been able to see clearly through it.

However, I cannot dismiss this argument without making some useful, but very short reflexions upon this great doctrine of our religion, namely, That the Son of God being made a sacrifice for us, and exposed to such bitter sufferings, and so cruel a death, for the expiation of our sins, should create in us the greatest dread and detestation of sin, and for ever deter us from all wilful transgression and disobedience. For if the guilt of our sins was done away upon such hard terms, and cost the dearly beloved Son of God so much sweat and blood, then surely we ought to take great heed, how, by our renewed provocations, we renew his passion, and do what in us lies to *crucify to ourselves the Son of God afresh, and to put him to an open shame.*

If God did so terribly afflict the dearly beloved of his soul for our sakes; if the Son of God was so grievously

wounded

wounded for our transgressions, and so sorely *bruised for our iniquities*; if so fearful a storm of vengeance fell upon the most innocent person that ever was, for our sins, then we have reason to take that kind and merciful admonition of the Son of God to sinners, to *sin no more, lest a worse thing*, if it be possible, *come upon* ourselves.

In this dispensation of God's grace and mercy to mankind, by the death of his Son, God seems to have gone to the very extremity of things, and almost further than goodness and justice will well admit, to afflict innocency itself, and to save the guilty. And if herein God hath expressed his hatred of sin in such a wonderful way of love and kindness to the sons of men, as looks almost like hatred of innocency, and his own Son; this ought, in all ingenuity and gratitude to our gracious Redeemer, who *was made a curse for us*, and *loved us* to that degree, as to *wash us from our sins in his own blood*; I say, this ought to beget in us a greater displeasure against sin, and a more perfect detestation of it, than if we had suffered the punishment due to it in our own persons: for in this case we could only have been displeased at ourselves, and our sins, as the just cause of our sufferings; but in the other we ought to hate sin as the unhappy occasion of the saddest misfortune and sorest calamities to the best man that ever was, and to our best friend, for our sins, and for our sakes.

Since then the Son of God hath so graciously condescended to be *made in all things like unto us, sin only excepted*; let us aspire as much as is possible to become like to him. Above all, let us hate and avoid sin, as the only thing in which the Son of God would have no part with us, though he was contented to suffer such bitter things to save us from the defilement and dominion of it, from the punishment and all the dismal consequences of it.

He had no sin: but God was pleased to *lay upon him the iniquities of us all*, and *to make his soul an offering for sin*, and to permit all that to be done to him which was due to us. He was contented to be sacrificed once for all mankind, that men might for ever cease from that inhumane and ineffectual way of sacrificing one another; whereby, instead of expiating their guilt, they did inflame

flame it, and by thinking to make atonement for their sins, they did in truth add to the number and heinousness of them.

And let us likeways learn from this admirable pattern, to pity those that are in misery, as Christ also hath pitied us; and *to save them that are ready to perish*, for his sake who *came to seek and to save us that were lost*.

Let us, upon all occasions, be ready to open our bowels of compassion towards the poor; in a thankful imitation of his grace and goodness, who for our sakes chose to be a beggar, that we for his sake might not despise the poor, but might have a tender regard and compassion to those whose condition in this world does so nearly resemble that in which the Son of God thought it fittest for him to appear, when he was pleased to become man.

In a word, let us, in the whole course, and in all the actions of our lives, *shew forth the virtues of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light*; and *hath raised up a mighty salvation for us*, that, *being delivered from all our* spiritual *enemies*, from sin, and all the powers of darkness, *we might serve him* who hath *saved us: walking in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our lives.*

Now, *to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb that was slain: to God even our Father, and to our Lord Jesus Christ, the first begotten from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth; unto him who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood*; and, whilst we were enemies to him, loved us at such a rate, as never any man did his friend: to him who became man, that he might bring us to God; and assumed our frail and mortal nature, that he might clothe us with immortality and life: to him who was pleased to dwell and live amongst us, that he might teach us how to live: to him *who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, and lives for ever to make intercession for us*: to him be glory and dominion, thanksgiving and praise, to eternal ages. *Amen.*

SERMON XLVIII.

Concerning the unity of the divine nature, and the bleſſed Trinity, &c.

1 TIM. ii. 5.

For there is one God.

THE particle *for* leads us to the conſideration of the context, and occaſion of theſe words; which in ſhort is this. The deſign of this epiſtle is, to direct Timothy, to whom St. Paul had committed the government of the church of Epheſus, how he ought to demean himſelf in that great and weighty charge. And, at the beginning of this chapter, he gives directions concerning public prayers in the church; that *prayers and thankſgivings be made for all men*, and for all ranks and orders of men; eſpecially for *kings, and all that are in authority, that under them* Chriſtians *might lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godlineſs and honeſty.*

And this he tells us was very ſuitable to the Chriſtian religion, by which God deſigned the ſalvation of mankind; and therefore it muſt needs be very acceptable to him, that we ſhould offer up prayers and thankſgivings to him in behalf of all men; *For this* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *is good and acceptable in the ſight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be ſaved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

And then it follows in the next words, *For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Chriſt Jeſus, who gave himſelf a ranſom for all:* as if he had ſaid, This univerſal charity of Chriſtians, in *praying for all men*, muſt needs be very acceptable to him to whom we put up our prayers, God the Father, who ſent his Son for the ſalvation of all men; and to him likeways by whom we offer up our prayers to God, and is amongſt us Chriſtians the only *Mediator between God and men*, in virtue of that price and ranſom which he paid for

for the redemption of all mankind; I say, for this reason, it must needs be very acceptable to him, that we should pray for all men, because he died for all men; and now that he is in heaven at the right hand of God, interceeds with him for the salvation of those for whom he died. *There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all.*

Which words, though they be brought in to prove more immediately, that it is *acceptable to God our Saviour*, that we should put up prayers to him for all men, because he desires the salvation of all men, and hath sent his Son to purchase the salvation of all men by the sacrifice of himself, and, in virtue of that sacrifice, to be the only Mediator between God and us: I say, though this be the immediate scope and design of these words, yet they are likeways a direction to us, unto whom we ought to address our prayers, namely, to God; and by whose mediation and intercession we ought to put up our prayers to God the Father, namely, by his Son Jesus Christ, who is constituted the only *Mediator between God and man.*

There are several propositions contained in this and the following verse. But I shall at present confine myself to the first, namely, That *there is one God*; that is, *but one*; as St. Paul elsewhere expresseth it, *There is none other God but one*, 1 Cor. viii. 4. And Moses lays this as the foundation of the natural law, as well as of the Jewish religion, *The Lord he is one God; there is none else besides him*, Deut. iv. 35. that is, besides Jehovah, whom the people of Israel did worship as the only true God. And this the Prophet Isaiah perpetually declares, in opposition to the Polytheism and variety of gods among the Heathen, Is. xliv. 6. *I am the first, and I am the last, and besides me there is no God.* And again, v. 8. *Is there a God besides me? yea, there is no God, I know not any.* He, who hath an infinite knowledge, and knows all things, knows no other God. And our blessed Saviour makes this the fundamental article of all religion, and the knowledge of it necessary to every man's salvation: *This* (says he) *is life eternal, to know thee the only true God.*

The unity of the divine nature is a notion wherein the greateſt and the wiſeſt part of mankind did always agree; and therefore may reaſonably be preſumed to be either natural, or to have ſprung from ſome original tradition delivered down to us from the firſt parents of mankind: I mean, that there is one ſupreme being, the author and cauſe of all things, whom the moſt ancient of the Heathen poets commonly called *the father of gods and men.* And thus Ariſtotle, in his metaphyſics, defines God, "the eternal, and moſt excellent, or beſt of "all living beings." And this notion of one ſupreme being agrees very well with that exact harmony which appears in the frame and government of the world; in which we ſee all things conſpiring to one end, and continuing in one uniform order and courſe; which cannot reaſonably be aſcribed to any other but a conſtant and uniform cauſe; and which, to a conſidering man, does plainly ſhew, that all things are made and governed by that one powerful principle, and great and wiſe mind, which we call *God.*

But although the generality of mankind had a notion of one ſupreme God, yet the idolatry of the Heathen plainly ſhews, that this notion, in proceſs of time, was greatly degenerated, and corrupted into an apprehenſion of a plurality of gods; though in reaſon it is evident enough that there can be no more gods than one; and that one, who is of infinite perfection, is as ſufficient to all purpoſes whatſoever, as ten thouſand deities, if they were poſſible, could poſſibly be; as I ſhall ſhew in the following diſcourſe.

Now, this multitude of deities, which the fond ſuperſtition, and vain imagination of men had formed to themſelves, were by the wiſer ſort, who, being forced to comply with the follies of the people, endeavoured to make the beſt of them, ſuppoſed to be either parts of the univerſe: which the Egyptians, as Plutarch tells us, thought to be the ſame with God; but then the moſt conſiderable parts of the univerſe they parcelled out into ſeveral deities: and as the ocean hath ſeveral names, according to the ſeveral coaſts and countries by which it paſſeth; ſo they gave ſeveral names to this one Deity, according to

to the several parts of the world, which several nations made the objects of their worship:

Or else they adored the several perfections and powers of the one supreme God, under several names and titles, with regard to the various blessings and benefits which they thought they received from him.

Thus the Indian philosophers, the Brachmans, are said to have worshipped the sun as the supreme Deity: and he certainly is the most worshipful of all sensible beings, and bids fairest for a deity; especially if he was, as they supposed, animated by a spirit endowed with knowledge and understanding. And if a man, who had been bred in a dark cave, should all on the sudden be brought out at noon-day to behold this visible world; after he had viewed and considered it a while, he would in all probability pitch upon the sun as the most likely, of all the things he had seen, to be a Deity. For if such a man had any notion of a God, and were to chuse one upon sight, he would without dispute fix upon the sun, and fall down and worship him.

And Macrobius manageth this as his main plea for the idolatry of the Heathen, that under all the several names of their gods they worshipped the sun: and this diversity of names was but a more distinct conception and acknowledgment of the many blessings and advantages which mankind received from him, and a more particular and express adoration of the several powers and perfections which were in him. And this was the very best defence, and all the tolerable sense which the wisest among the Heathen could make, of the multitude of their deities.

And yet whilst they generally owned one supreme being, that was the principle and original of all things, they worshipped several subordinate deities, as really distinct from one another. Some of these they fancied to be superior to the rest, and to have their residence in heaven, by which Marsilius Ficinus supposes Plato to mean no more but the chief of the angels. These were called θεοὶ, *dii superi*, and *dii cœlestes*; "superior and heavenly "gods." The scripture terms them *the host of heaven*, meaning the sun, moon, and stars; which they supposed

to be animated, or at leaſt to be inhabited by angels, or glorious ſpirits, whom they called *gods*.

Other of their deities were accounted much inferior to theſe, being ſuppoſed to be the ſouls of their deceaſed heroes; who, for their great and worthy deeds when they lived upon earth, were ſuppoſed after death to be tranſlated into the number of their gods; and theſe were called *ſemidei* and *deaſtri*; that is, "half gods, and a "ſort of gods." And as the other were celeſtial, ſo theſe were δαίμονες ἐπιχθόνιοι, a kind of terreſtrial ſpirits, that were preſidents and procurators of human affairs here below; that is, a middle ſort of divine powers, that were mediators and agents between God and men, and did carry the prayers and ſupplications of men to God, and bring down the commands and bleſſings of God to men.

But in the midſt of all this crowd and confuſion of deities, and the various ſuperſtitions about them, the wiſer Heathen, as Thales, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Ariſtotle, Tully, Plutarch, and others, preſerved a true notion of one ſupreme God, whom they defined, "An "infinite Spirit, pure from all matter, and free from all "imperfection:" and all the variety of their worſhip was, as they pretended in excuſe of it, but a more particular owning of the various repreſentations of the divine power and excellencies which manifeſted themſelves in the world, and of the ſeveral communications of bleſſings and favours by them imparted to men. And Tertullian (*adverſus Marcionem*, *l.* 1. *c.* 10.) obſerves, that even when idolatry had very much obſcured the glory of the ſovereign deity, yet the greater part of mankind did ſtill, in their common forms of ſpeech, appropriate the name of God in a more eſpecial and peculiar manner to one, ſaying, "If God grant, If God pleaſe," and the like.

So that there is ſufficient ground to believe, that the unity of the divine nature, or the notion of one ſupreme God, creator and governor of the world, was the primitive and general belief of mankind; and that polytheiſm and idolatry were a corruption and degeneracy from the original notion which mankind had concerning God; as the ſcripture-hiſtory doth declare and teſtify.

And

And this account which I have given of the heathen idolatry, doth by no means excuſe it. For whatever may be ſaid by way of extenuation in behalf of ſome few of the wiſer and more devout among them, the generality were groſsly guilty both of believing more gods, and of worſhipping falſe gods.

And this muſt needs be a very great crime, ſince the ſcripture every where declares God to be particularly jealous in this caſe, and that *he will not give his glory to another, nor his praiſe to graven images*: nay, we may not ſo much as make uſe of ſenſible images to put us in mind of God; leſt devout ignorance, ſeeing the worſhip which wiſe men paid towards an idol, ſhould be drawn to terminate their worſhip there, as being the very Deity itſelf; which was certainly the caſe of the greateſt part of the heathen world.

And ſurely thoſe Chriſtians are in no leſs danger of idolatry, who pay a veneration to images, by kneeling down and praying before them: and in this they are much more inexcuſable, becauſe they offend againſt a much clearer light: and yet when they go about to juſtify this practice, are able to bring no other nor better pleas for themſelves, than the heathen did for their worſhipping of images, and for praying to their inferior deities, whom they looked upon as mediators between the gods in heaven and men upon earth.

There is but one objection, that I know of, againſt the general conſent of mankind concerning the unity of God; and it is this, That there was an ancient doctrine of ſome of the moſt ancient nations, that there were two firſt cauſes or principles of all things; the one the cauſe of all good, and the other of all the evil that is in the world: the reaſon whereof ſeems to have been, that they could not apprehend how things of ſo contrary a nature, as good and evil, could proceed from one and the ſame cauſe.

And theſe two principles in ſeveral nations were called by ſeveral names. Plutarch ſays, that among the Greeks the good principle was called *God*, and the evil principle Δαίμων, or *the devil*. In conformity to which ancient tradition, the Manichees, a ſect, which called themſelves *Chriſtians*, did advance two principles; the one

one infinitely good, which they ſuppoſed to be the original cauſe of all the good which is in the world; the other infinitely evil, to which they aſcribed all the evils that are in the world.

But all this is very plainly a corruption of a much more ancient tradition concerning that old ſerpent the devil, the head of the fallen angels, who, by tempting our firſt parents to tranſgreſs a poſitive and expreſs law of God, brought ſin firſt into the world, and all the evils conſequent upon it; of which the ſcripture gives us a moſt expreſs and particular account.

And as to the notion of a being infinitely evil, into which this tradition was corrupted, after idolatry had prevailed in the world; beſides that it is a contradiction, it would likewiſe be to no purpoſe, to aſſert two oppoſite principles, of infinite, that is, of equal force and power; for two infinites muſt of neceſſity be equal to one another; becauſe nothing can be more or greater than infinite: and therefore, if two infinite beings were poſſible, they would certainly be equal, and could not be otherwiſe.

Now, that the notion of a principle infinitely evil is a contradiction, will be very plain, if we conſider, that what is infinitely evil, muſt, in ſtrict reaſoning, and by neceſſary conſequence, be infinitely imperfect, and therefore infinitely weak; and for that reaſon, though never ſo malicious and miſchievous, yet, being infinitely weak and fooliſh, could never be in capacity either to contrive miſchief, or to execute it.

But if it ſhould be admitted, that a being infinitely miſchievous could be infinitely knowing and powerful, yet it could effect no evil; becauſe the oppoſite principle of infinite goodneſs being alſo infinitely wiſe and powerful, they would tie up one another's hands. So that, upon this ſuppoſition, the notion of a Deity muſt ſignify juſt nothing; becauſe, by virtue of the eternal oppoſition and equal conflict of theſe two principles, they would keep one another at a perpetual bay; and being juſt an equal match to one another, the one having as much mind and power to do good, as the other to do evil; inſtead of being two deities, they would be but two idols, able to do neither good nor evil.

And

And having, I hope, now sufficiently cleared this objection, I shall proceed to shew how agreeable this principle, That *there is but one God*, is to the common reason of mankind, and to the clearest and most essential notions which we have of God. And this will appear these two ways.

1. By considering the most essential perfections of the divine nature.

2. From the repugnancy and impossibility, the great absurdity and inconvenience of supposing more gods than one.

I. By considering the most essential perfections of the divine nature. Absolute perfection, which we ascribe to God, as the most essential notion which mankind hath always had concerning him, does necessarily suppose unity; because this is essential to the notion of a being that is absolutely perfect, that all perfection meets, and is united in such a being: but to imagine more gods, and some perfections to be in one, and some in another, does destroy the most essential notion which men have of God; namely, that he is a being absolutely perfect; that is, as perfect as is possible. Now, to suppose some perfections in one god, which are not in another, is to suppose some possible perfection to be wanting in God; which is a contradiction to the most natural and the most easy notion which all men have of God, that he is a being in whom all perfections do meet and are united: but if we suppose more gods, each of which hath all perfections united in him, then all but one would be superfluous and needless; and therefore, by just and necessary consequence, not only may, but of necessity must be supposed not to be, since necessary existence is essential to the Deity: and therefore if but one God be necessary, there can be no more.

II. From the repugnancy and impossibility, the great absurdity and inconvenience of the contrary. For suppose there were more gods, two, for example; and if there may be two, there may be a million, for we can stop no where: I say, suppose two gods; either these two would be in all perfections equal and alike, or unequal and unlike: if equal and alike in all things, then, as I said before, one of them would be needless and superfluous;

perfluous; and if one, why not as well the other? they being supposed to be in all things perfectly alike; and then there would be no necessity at all, of the being of a God: and yet is granted on all hands, that necessary existence is essential to the notion of a God: but if they be unequal, that is, one of them inferior to and less perfect than the other, that which is inferior and less perfect could not be God, because he would not have all perfection. So that, which way soever we turn the thing, and look upon it, the notion of more gods than one, is by its own repugnancy and self-contradiction destructive of itself.

Before I come to apply this doctrine of the unity of God, I must not pass by a very considerable difficulty, which will most certainly arise in every man's mind, without taking particular notice of it, and endeavouring to remove it, if I can. And it is the doctrine of the blessed Trinity, or of three real differences or distinct persons in one and the same divine nature.

And though this be not a difficulty peculiar only to the christian religion, as by the generality of those who urge this objection against Christians hath been inconsiderately thought; for it is certain, that long before Christianity appeared in the world, there was a very ancient tradition, both among Jews and Heathens, concerning three real differences or distinctions in the divine nature, very nearly resembling the christian doctrine of the Trinity; as I shall have occasion more fully to shew by and by: yet it cannot be denied, but that this difficulty doth in a more especial manner affect the christian religion; the generality of Christians, who do most firmly believe the Trinity, believing likewise, at the same time, more stedfastly, if it it be possible, that there is but one God: *To us*, (saith St. Paul, 1 Corinth. viii. 6.) that is, to us Christians, *there is but one God.* But how can this possibly consist with the common doctrine of Christians concerning the Trinity, God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to each of whom they attribute, as they verily believe the scripture does, the most incommunicable properties and perfections of the divine nature? And what is this less in effect, than to say, that there are three gods?

For

For the clearing of this difficulty, I shall, with all the brevity I can, offer these following considerations; which I hope, to an impartial and unprejudiced judgment, will be sufficient to remove it, or at least to break the main force and strength of it.

1. I desire it may be well considered, that there is a wide difference between the nice speculations of the schools, beyond what is revealed in scripture, concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, and what the scripture only teaches and asserts concerning this mystery. For it is not to be denied, but that the schoolmen, who abounded in wit and leisure, tho' very few among them had either exact skill in the Holy Scriptures, or in ecclesiastical antiquity, and the writings of the ancient fathers of the christian church; I say, it cannot be denied, but that these speculative and very acute men, who wrought a great part of their divinity out of their own brains, as spiders do cobwebs out of their own bowels, have started a thousand subtilties about this mystery, such as no Christian is bound to trouble his head withal: much less is it necessary for him to understand those niceties, which we may reasonably presume that they who talk of them did themselves never thoroughly understand; and, least of all, is it necessary to believe them. The modesty of Christians is contented in divine mysteries to know what God hath thought fit to reveal concerning them, and hath no curiosity to be *wise above that which is written*. It is enough to believe what God says concerning these matters; and, if any man will venture to say more, every other man surely is at his liberty, to believe as he sees reason.

2. I desire it may, in the next place, be considered, that the doctrine of the Trinity, even as it is asserted in scripture, is acknowledged by us to be still a great mystery, and so imperfectly revealed, as to be in a great measure incomprehensible by human reason. And therefore, though some learned and judicious men may have very commendably attempted a more particular explication of this great mystery by the strength of reason; yet I dare not pretend to that, knowing both the difficulty and danger of such an attempt, and mine own insufficiency for it.

All

All that I ever designed upon this argument, was to make out the credibility of the thing from the authority of the Holy Scriptures, without descending to a more particular explication of it than the scripture hath given us; lest, by endeavouring to lay the difficulties which are already started about it, new ones should be raised, and such as may perhaps be much harder to be removed than those which we have now to grapple withal. And this I hope I have in some measure done in one of the former discourses, [*Ser.* 44.] Nor indeed do I see, that it is any ways necessary to do more; it being sufficient, that God hath declared what he thought fit in this matter; and that we do firmly believe what he says concerning it to be true, though we do not perfectly comprehend the meaning of all that he hath said about it.

For in this, and the like cases, I take an implicit faith to be very commendable; that is, to believe whatever we are sufficiently assured God hath revealed, tho' we do not fully understand his meaning in such a revelation. And thus every man who believes the Holy Scriptures to be a truly divine revelation, does implicitly believe a great part of the prophetical books of scripture, and several obsure expressions in those books, tho' he do not particularly understand the meaning of all the predictions and expressions contained in them. In like manner, there are certainly a great many very good Christians, who do not believe and comprehend the mysteries of faith nicely enough to approve themselves to a scholastical and magisterial judge of controversies, who yet, if they do heartily embrace the doctrines which are clearly revealed in scripture, and live up to the plain precepts of the christian religion, will, I doubt not, be very well approved by the great and just, and by the infallibly infallible judge of the world.

3. Let it be further considered, that though neither the word *trinity*, nor perhaps *person*, in the sense in which it is used by divines when they treat of this mystery, be any where to be met with in scripture; yet it cannot be denied, but that three are there spoken of by the names of *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*, in whose name every Christian is baptized, and to each of whom the highest titles and properties of God are in scripture attributed;

attributed; and these three are spoken of with as much distinction from one another as we use to speak of three several persons.

So that though the word *trinity* be not found in scripture, yet these three are there expressly and frequently mentioned: and a trinity is nothing but three of any thing. And so likewise, though the word *person* be not there expressly applied to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; yet it will be very hard to find a more convenient word whereby to express the distinction of these three. For which reason I could never yet see any just cause to quarrel at this term. For since the Holy Spirit of God in scripture, hath thought fit, in speaking of these three, to distinguish them from one another, as we use in common speech to distinguish three several persons, I cannot see any reason why, in the explication of this mystery, which purely depends upon divine revelation, we should not speak of it in the same manner as the scripture doth: and though the word *person* is now become a term of art, I see no cause why we should decline it, so long as we mean by it neither more nor less than what the scripture says in other words.

4. It deserves further to be considered, that there hath been a very ancient tradition concerning three real differences or distinctions in the divine nature; and these, as I said before, very nearly resembling the christian doctrine of the Trinity.

Whence this tradition had its original, is not easy, upon good and certain grounds, to say. But certain it is, that the Jews anciently had this notion; and that they did distinguish *the Word of God*, and *the Holy Spirit of God*, from him who was absolutely called *God*, and whom they looked upon as the first principle of all things: as is plain from Philo Judæus, and Moses Nachmanides, and others, cited by the learned Grotius, in his incomparable book *of the truth of the christian religion*, book 5.

And, among the heathen, Plato, who probably enough might have this notion from the Jews, did make three distinctions in the Deity, by the names of *Essential Goodness*, and *Mind*, and *Spirit*.

So that whatever objections this matter may be liable

to, it is not so peculiar a doctrine of the christian religion, as many have imagined, though it is revealed by it with much more clearness and certainty: and, consequently, neither the Jews nor Plato have any reason to object it to us Christians; especially since they pretend no other ground for it, but either their own reason, or an ancient tradition from their fathers: whereas we Christians do appeal to express divine revelation for what we believe in this matter, and do believe it singly upon that account.

5. It is besides very considerable, that the scriptures do deliver this doctrine of the Trinity without any manner of doubt or question concerning the unity of the divine nature; and not only so, but do most stedfastly and constantly assert, that there is but one God. And in those very texts in which these three differences are asserted; as where St. John makes mention of *the Father, the Word,* and *the Spirit,* the unity of these three is likewise affirmed: *There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit; and these three are one.*

6. It is yet further considerable, that from this mystery, as delivered in scripture, a plurality of Gods cannot be inferred without making the scripture grosly to contradict itself; which I charitably suppose the Socinians would be as loth to admit as we ourselves are. And if either councils, or fathers, or schoolmen, have so explained this mystery, as to give any just ground, or so much as a plausible colour for such an inference, let the blame fall where it is due, and let it not be charged on the Holy Scriptures; but rather, as the Apostle says in another case, *let God be true, and every man a liar.*

7. And lastly, I desire it may be considered, that it is not repugnant to reason, to believe some things which are incomprehensible by our reason; provided that we have sufficient ground and reason for the belief of them: especially if they be concerning God, who is in his nature incomprehensible; and we be well assured that he hath revealed them. And therefore it ought not to offend us, that these differences in the Deity are incomprehensible by our finite understandings; because the divine

vine nature itſelf is ſo, and yet the belief of that is the foundation of all religion.

There are a great many things in nature which we cannot comprehend how they either are, or can be: As the continuity of matter; that is, how the parts of it do hang ſo faſt together, that they are many times very hard to be parted; and yet we are ſure that it is ſo, becauſe we ſee it every day. So likewiſe, how the ſmall ſeeds of things contain the whole form and nature of the things from which they proceed, and into which by degrees they grow; and yet we plainly ſee this every year.

There are many things likewiſe in ourſelves, which no man is able in any meaſure to comprehend, as to the manner how they are done and performed: As the vital union of ſoul and body. Who can imagine by what device or means a ſpirit comes to be ſo cloſely united and ſo firmly linked to a material body, that they are not to be parted without great force and violence offered to nature? The like may be ſaid of the operations of our ſeveral faculties of ſenſe and imagination, of memory and reaſon, and eſpecially of the liberty of our wills: and yet we certainly find all theſe faculties in ourſelves, though we cannot either comprehend or explain the particular manner in which the ſeveral operations of them are performed.

And if we cannot comprehend the manner of thoſe operations which we plainly perceive and feel to be in ourſelves, much leſs can we expect to comprehend things without us; and leaſt of all can we pretend to comprehend the infinite nature and perfections of God, and every thing belonging to him. For God himſelf is certainly the greateſt myſtery of all other, and acknowledged by mankind to be, in his nature, and in the particular manner of his exiſtence, incomprehenſible by human underſtanding. And the reaſon of this is very evident; becauſe God is infinite, and our knowledge and underſtanding is but finite: and yet no ſober man ever thought this a good reaſon to call the being of God in queſtion.

The ſame may be ſaid of God's certain knowledge of future contingencies, which depend upon the uncertain

wills of free agents; it being utterly inconceivable, how any understanding, how large and perfect soever, can certainly know beforehand that which depends upon the free will of another, which is an arbitrary and uncertain cause.

And yet the scripture doth not only attribute this foreknowledge to God; but gives us also plain instances of God's foretelling such things, many ages before they happened, as could not come to pass but by the sins of men; in which we are sure that God can have no hand, though nothing can happen without his permission. Such was that most memorable event of the death of Christ, who, as the scripture tells us, was *by wicked hands crucified and slain:* and yet even this is said to have happened *according to the determinate foreknowledge of God;* and was punctually foretold by him some hundreds of years before. Nay, the scripture doth not only ascribe this power and perfection to the divine knowledge, but natural reason hath been forced to acknowledge it; as we may see in some of the wisest of the philosophers. And yet it would puzzle the greatest philosopher that ever was, to give any tolerable account how any knowledge whatsoever can certainly and infallibly foresee an event through uncertain and contingent causes. All the reasonable satisfaction that can be had in this matter is this, that it is not at all unreasonable to suppose, that infinite knowledge may have ways of knowing things, which our finite understandings can by no means comprehend how they can possibly be known.

Again, there is hardly any thing more inconceivable, than how a thing should be of itself, and without any cause of its being: and yet our reason compels us to acknowledge this; because we certainly see, that something is, which must either have been of itself, and without a cause, or else something that we do not see must have been of itself, and have made all other things. And by this reasoning, we are forced to acknowledge a Deity; the mind of man being able to find no rest, but in the acknowledgment of one eternal and wise mind, as the principle and first cause of all other things: and this principle is that which mankind do by general consent call *God.* So that God hath laid a sure foundation of our

our acknowledgment of his being, in the reason of our own minds. And though it be one of the hardest things in the world, to conceive how any thing can be of itself: yet necessity drives us to acknowledge it whether we will or no: and this being once granted, our reason being tired in trying all other ways, will, for its own quiet and ease, force us at last to fall in with the general apprehension and belief of mankind concerning a Deity.

To give but one instance more: There is the like difficulty in conceiving how any thing can be made out of nothing: and yet our reason doth oblige us to believe it; because matter, which is a very imperfect being, and merely passive, must either always have been of itself, or else, by the infinite power of a most perfect and active being, must have been made out of nothing; which is much more credible, than that any thing so imperfect as matter is, should be of itself; because that which is of itself, cannot be conceived to have any bounds and limits of its being and perfection; for by the same reason that it necessarily is, and of itself, it must necessarily have all perfection, which it is certain matter hath not; and yet necessary existence is so great a perfection, that we cannot reasonably suppose any thing that hath this perfection, to want any other.

Thus you see, by these instances, that it is not repugnant to reason, to believe a great many things to be, of the manner of whose existence we are not able to give a particular and distinct account. And much less is it repugnant to reason, to believe those things concerning God, which we are very well assured he hath declared concerning himself, though these things by our reason should be incomprehensible.

And this is truly the case as to the matter now under debate. We are sufficiently assured, that the scriptures are a divine revelation, and that this mystery of the Trinity is therein declared to us. Now, that we cannot comprehend it, is no sufficient reason not to believe it: for, if this were a good reason for not believing it, then no man ought to believe that there is a God; because his nature is most certainly incomprehensible. But we are assured by many arguments that there is a God; and

the ſame natural reaſon which aſſures us that he is, doth likewiſe aſſure us, that he is incomprehenſible: and therefore our believing him to be ſo, doth by no means overthrow our belief of his being.

In like manner, we are aſſured by divine revelation of the truth of this doctrine of the Trinity; and being once aſſured of that, our not being able fully to comprehend it, is not reaſon enough to ſtagger our belief of it. A man cannot deny what he ſees, though the neceſſary conſequence of admitting it may be ſomething which he cannot comprehend. One cannot deny the frame of this world which he ſees with his eyes, though from thence it will neceſſarily follow, that either that or ſomething elſe muſt be of itſelf; which yet, as I ſaid before, is a thing which no man can comprehend how it can be.

And, by the ſame reaſon, a man muſt not deny what God ſays, to be true; though he cannot comprehend many things which God ſays: as particularly concerning this myſtery of the Trinity. It ought then to ſatisfy us, that there is ſufficient evidence, that this doctrine is delivered in ſcripture; and that what is there declared concerning it, doth not imply a contradiction. For why ſhould our finite underſtandings pretend to comprehend that which is infinite; or to know all the real differences that are conſiſtent with the unity of an infinite being; or to be able fully to explain this myſtery by any ſimilitude or reſemblance taken from finite beings?

But, before I leave this argument, I cannot but take notice of one thing which they of the church of Rome are perpetually objecting to us upon this occaſion; and it is this: That by the ſame reaſon that we believe the doctrine of the Trinity, we may and muſt receive that of tranſubſtantiation. God forbid: Becauſe of all the doctrines that ever were in any religion, this of tranſubſtantiation is certainly the moſt abominably abſurd.

However, this objection plainly ſhews how fondly and obſtinately they are addicted to their own errors, how miſhapen and monſtrous ſoever; inſomuch that, rather than the dictates of their church, how abſurd ſoever, ſhould be called in queſtion, they will queſtion the truth

truth even of Christianity itself; and if we will not take in transubstantiation, and admit it to be a necessary article of the Christian faith, they grow so sullen and desperate, that they matter not what becomes of all the rest; and, rather than not have their will of us in that which is controverted, they will give up that which by their own confession is an undoubted article of the Christian faith, and not controverted on either side; except only by the Socinians, who yet are hearty enemies to transubstantiation, and have exposed the absurdity of it with great advantage.

But I shall endeavour to return a more particular answer to this objection, and such a one as I hope will satisfy every considerate and unprejudiced mind, that after all this confidence and swaggering of theirs, there is by no means equal reason either for the receiving, or for the rejecting of these two doctrines of the Trinity and transubstantiation.

1. There is not equal reason for the belief of these two doctrines. This objection, if it be of any force, must suppose that there is equal evidence and proof from scripture for these two doctrines. But this we utterly deny; and with great reason; because it is no more evident from the words of scripture, that the sacramental bread is substantially changed into Christ's natural body, by virtue of those words, *This is my body*, that it is, that Christ is substantially changed into a natural vine by virtue of those words, John xv. 1. *I am the true vine*; or than that the rock in the wilderness, of which the Israelites drank, was substantially changed into the person of Christ, because it is expressly said, *that rock was Christ*; or than that the Christian church is substantially changed into the natural body of Christ, because it is in express terms said of the church, that *it is his body*, Eph. i. 23.

But besides this, several of their own most learned writers have freely acknowledged, that transubstantiation can neither be directly proved, nor necessarily concluded from scripture. But this the writers of the Christian church did never acknowledge concerning the Trinity, and the divinity of Christ; but have always appealed to the clear and undeniable testimonies of scripture for the proof

proof of these doctrines. And then the whole force of the objection amounts to this, That if I am bound to believe what I am sure God says, though I cannot comprehend it; then I am bound by the same reason to believe the greatest absurdity in the world, though I have no manner of assurance of any divine revelation concerning it. And if this be their meaning, though we understand not transubstantiation, yet we very well understand what they would have, but cannot grant it; because there is not equal reason to believe two things, for one of which there is good proof, and for the other no proof at all.

2. Neither is there equal reason for the rejecting of these two doctrines. This the objection supposes, which yet cannot be supposed, but upon one or both of these two grounds; either because these two doctrines are equally incomprehensible; or because they are equally loaded with absurdities and contradictions.

1st. The first is no good ground of rejecting any doctrine, merely because it is incomprehensible; as I have abundantly shewed already. But besides this, there is a wide difference between plain matters of sense, and mysteries concerning God; and it does by no meaas follow, that if a man do once admit any thing concerning God, which he cannot comprehend, he hath no reason afterwards to believe what he himself sees. This is a most unreasonable and destructive way of arguing; because it strikes at the foundation of all certainty, and sets every man at liberty to deny the most plain and evident truths of Christianity, if he may not be humoured in having the absurdest things in the world admitted for true. The next step will be, to persuade us, that we may as well deny the being of God, because his nature is incomprehensible by our reason, as deny transubstantiation, because it evidently contradicts our senses.

2dly, Nor are these two doctrines loaded with the like absurdities and contradictions. So far from this, that the doctrine of the Trinity, as it is delivered in the scriptures, and hath already been explained, hath no absurdity or contradiction, either involved in it, or necessarily consequent upon it. But the doctrine of transubstantiation is big with all imaginable absurdity and contradiction. And their own schoolmen have sufficiently exposed

posed it; especially Scotus: and he designed to do so; as any man that attentively reads him, may plainly discover: for, in his disputation about it, he treats this doctrine with the greatest contempt, as a new invention of the council of Lateran under Pope Innocent III. to the decree of which council concerning it he seems to pay a formal submission, but really derides it as contrary to the common sense and reason of mankind, and not at all supported by scripture; as any one may easily discern that will carefully consider his manner of handling it, and the result of his whole disputation about it.

And now, suppose there were some appearance of absurdity and contradiction in the doctrine of the Trinity as it is delivered in scripture, must we therefore believe a doctrine which is not at all revealed in scripture, and which hath certainly in it all the absurdities in the world, and all the contradictions to sense and reason, and which, once admitted, doth at once destroy all certainty? Yes, say they, why not? since we of the church of Rome are satisfied that this doctrine is revealed in scripture; or, if it be not, is defined by the church, which is every whit as good. But is this equal, to demand of us the belief of a thing which hath always been controverted, not only between us and them, but even among themselves, at least till the council of Trent; and this upon such unreasonable terms, that we must either yield this point to them, or else renounce a doctrine agreed on both sides to be revealed in scripture?

To shew the unreasonableness of this proceeding, let us suppose a priest of the church of Rome pressing a Jew or Turk to the belief of transubstantiation, and because one kindness deserves another, the Jew or Turk should demand of him the belief of all the fables in the Talmud, or in the Alcoran; since none of these, nor indeed all of them together, are near so absurd as transubstatiation: would not this be much more reasonable and equal than what they demand of us; since no absurdity, how monstrous and big soever, can be thought of, which may not enter into an understanding in which a breach hath been already made wide enough to admit transubstantiation? The priests of Baal did not half so much deserve to be exposed by the Prophet for their superstition and folly,

folly, as the priests of the church of Rome do for this senseless and stupid doctrine of theirs with a hard name. I shall only add this one thing more, that if this doctrine were possible to be true, and clearly proved to be so; yet it would be evidently useless, and to no purpose. For it pretends to change the substance of one thing into the substance of another thing that is already, and before this change is pretended to be made. But to what purpose? Not to make the body of Christ; for that was already in being: and the substance of the bread is lost; nothing of it remaineth but the accidents, which are good for nothing, and indeed are nothing, when the substance is destroyed and gone.

All that now remains, is, to make some practical inferences from this doctrine of the unity of the divine nature. And they shall be the same which God himself makes by Moses, Deut. vi. 4, 5. which text is also cited by our Saviour, Mark xii. 29, 30, 31. *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. And thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* So that, according to our Saviour, the whole duty of man, the *love of God*, and *of our neighbour*, is founded on the unity of the divine nature.

1. The love of God: *The Lord our God is one Lord:* therefore *thou shalt love him with all thine heart*, &c. *This is the first and great commandment.* And it comprehends in it all the duties of the first table, as naturally flowing from it; as, that we should serve him only, and pay no religious worship to any but to him; for to pay religious worship to any thing, is to make it a God, and to acknowledge it for such; and therefore God being but one, we can give religious worship to none but to him only: And among all the parts of religious worship, none is more peculiarly appropriated to the Deity than solemn invocation and prayer; for he to whom men address their requests, at all times, and in all places, must be supposed to be always every where present, to understand all our desires and wants, and to be able to supply them; and this God only is, and can do.

So likeways from the unity of the divine nature may be

be inferred, that we ſhould not worſhip God by any ſenſible image or repreſentation; becauſe God being a ſingular being, there is nothing like him, or that can, without injuring and debaſing his moſt ſpiritual, and perfect, and immenſe being, be compared to him; as he himſelf ſpeaks in the Prophet, If. xlvi. 5. *To whom will ye liken me, ſaith the Lord, and make me equal?* And therefore, with no diſtinction whatſoever, can it be lawful to give religious worſhip, or any part of it, to any but God. We can pray to none but to him, becauſe he only is every where preſent, and *only knows the hearts of all the children of men*, 1 Kings viii. 39. which Solomon gives as the reaſon why we ſhould addreſs our ſupplications to God only, *who dwelleth in the heavens*.

So that the reaſon of theſe two precepts is founded in the unity and ſingularity of the divine nature: and unleſs there be more gods than one, we muſt worſhip him only, and pray to none but him; becauſe we can give invocation to none, but to him only whom we believe to be God; as St. Paul reaſons, Rom. x. 14. *How ſhall they call on him in whom they have not believed?*

2. The love likeways of our neighbour is founded in the unity of the divine nature, and may be inferred from it; *Hear, O Iſrael, the Lord our God is one Lord*; therefore *thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf*. And the Apoſtle gives this reaſon why Chriſtians ſhould be at unity among themſelves, Eph. iv. 6. *There is one God and Father of all*; and therefore we ſhould *keep the unity of the ſpirit in the bond of peace*: that is, live in mutual love and peace. The Prophet likeways aſſigns this reaſon why all mankind ſhould be upon good terms with one another, and not be injurious one to another, Mal. ii. 10. *Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherouſly every man againſt his brother?*

And therefore, when we ſee ſuch hatred and enmity among men, ſuch diviſions and animoſities among Chriſtians, we may not only aſk St. Paul's queſtion, *Is Chriſt divided*, that we cannot agree about ſerving him; either all to ſerve him in one way, or to bear with one another in our differences? I ſay, we may not only aſk St. Paul's queſtion, *Is Chriſt divided?* but may aſk further, Is G[illegible] divi[illegible]?

divided? Is there not one God? and are we not all his offspring? Are we not all the ſons of Adam, who was the ſon of God? So that, if we trace ourſelves to our original, we ſhall find a great nearneſs and equality among men. And this equality, that we are all God's creatures and image, and that the one only God is the father of us all, is a more real ground of mutual love, and peace, and equity in our dealings one with another, than any of thoſe petty differences and diſtinctions, of ſtrong and weak, of rich and poor, of wiſe and fooliſh, of baſe and honourable, can be to encourage men to any thing of inſolence, injuſtice, and inequality of dealing one towards another: becauſe that wherein we all agree, that we are the creatures and children of God, and have all one common father, is eſſential and conſtant; but thoſe things wherein we differ, are accidental and mutable, and happen to one another by turns.

Thus much may ſuffice to have been ſpoken concerning the firſt propoſition in the text, There is one God. To him, Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, be all honour, and glory, dominion, and power, now and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON XLIX.

Concerning reſolution and ſtedfaſtneſs in religion.

Preached at St. Lawrence-Jewry, June 3. 1684.

The PREFACE to the Reader.

BEing, I hope, for the remainder of my life, releaſed from that irkſome and unpleaſant work of controverſy and wrangling about religion, I ſhall now turn my thoughts to ſomething more agreeable to my temper, and of a more direct and immediate tendency to the promoting of true religion, to the happineſs of human ſocicty, and the reformation of the world.

I have

I have no intention to reflect upon any that stand up in defence of the truth, and contend earnestly *for it, endeavouring,* in the spirit of meekness, *to reclaim those that are in error. For I doubt not but a very good man may, upon several occasions, be almost unavoidably engaged in controversies of religion; and if he have a head clear and cool enough, so as to be master of his own notions and temper in that hot kind of service, he may therein do considerable advantage to the truth: though a man that hath once drawn blood in controversy, as Mr. Mede expresseth it, is seldom known ever perfectly to recover his own good temper afterwards.*

For this reason, a good man should not be very willing, when his Lord comes, *to* be found so doing, *and as it were* beating his fellow servants. *And all controversy, as it is usually managed, is little better. A good man would be loth to be taken out of the world reeking hot from a sharp contention with a perverse adversary; and not a little out of countenance, to find himself in this temper translated into the calm and peaceable regions of the blessed, where nothing but perfect charity and good-will reign for ever.*

I know not whether St. Paul, who had been taken up into the third heavens, *did, by that question of his,* Where is the disputer of THIS WORLD? *intend to insinuate, that this wrangling work hath place only in this world, and upon this earth, where only there is a dust to be raised; but will have no place in the other. But whether St. Paul intended this or not, the thing itself I think is true, that in the other world all things will be clear, and past dispute. To be sure, among the blessed; and probably also among the miserable, unless fierce and furious contentions, with great heat without light, about things of no moment and concernment to them, should be designed for a part of their torment.*

As to the following sermons, I am sensible that the style of them is more loose and full of words, than is agreeable to just and exact discourses; but so I think the style of popular sermons ought to be: and therefore I have not been very careful to mend this matter; chusing rather that they should appear in that native simplicity in which, so many years ago, they were first framed, than dressed up with too much care and art. As they are, I hope the candid and ingenuous readers will take them in good part.

And I do heartily wish, that all that are concerned in the respective duties treated on in the following sermons, would be persuaded so to lay them to heart, as to put them effectually in practice: that how much soever the reformation of this corrupt and degenerate age in which we live is almost utterly to be despaired of, we may yet have a more comfortable prospect of future times, by seeing the foundation of a better world begun to be laid in the careful and conscientious discharge of the duties here mentioned; that by this means the generations to come may know God, and the children yet unborn may fear the Lord.

I have great reason to be sensible how fast the infirmities of age are coming upon me, and therefore must work the works of him *whose providence hath placed me in the station wherein I am,* whilst it is day; because the night cometh when no man can work.

I knew very well, before I entered upon this great and weighty charge, my own manifold defects, and how unequal my best abilities were for the due discharge of it; but I did not feel this so sensibly as I now do every day more and more. And therefore, that I might make some small amends for greater failings, I knew not how better to place the broken hours I had to spare from almost perpetual business of one kind or other, than in preparing something for the public, that might be of use to recover the decayed piety and virtue of the present age, in which iniquity doth so much abound, and the love of God and religion is grown so cold.

To this end I have chosen to publish these plain sermons, and to recommend them to the serious perusal and faithful practice both of the pastors and people committed to my charge; earnestly beseeching almighty God, that, by his blessing, they may prove effectual to that good end for which they are sincerely designed.

The

The SERMON.

JOSHUA xxiv. 15.

—But as for me and my houſe, we will ſerve the Lord.

The firſt ſermon on this text.

AFTER Joſhua had brought the people of Iſrael into the promiſed land, and ſettled them in the quiet poſſeſſion of it, his great deſire was, to eſtabliſh them in the true religion, namely, in the worſhip of the one true God, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and given them the poſſeſſion of that good land, the land of Canaan.

And now, finding himſelf weak and declining, being an hundred and ten years old, and fearing, leſt, after his death, the people ſhould fall off from the true religion to the worſhip of idols; he, like a wiſe and good governor, conſiders with himſelf what courſe he had beſt to take to keep them firm and ſtedfaſt in their religion, and to prevent their defection to the idolatry of the nations round about them.

And to this end he calls a general aſſembly of *all Iſrael*, chap. xxiii. 2. that is, of the elders, and heads, and judges, and officers of the ſeveral tribes; and, in a very wiſe and eloquent ſpeech, repreſents to them in what a miraculous manner God had *driven out the nations before them, much greater and ſtronger nations than they*, and had given them their land to poſſeſs it; and, in a word, had performed punctually all that he had promiſed to them.

And therefore they ought to *take good heed to themſelves, to love God, and to ſerve him*; and if they did not, he tells them, that it ſhould *come to paſs, that as all good things are come upon you, which the Lord your God promiſed you; ſo ſhall the Lord bring upon you all evil things, until he have deſtroyed you from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you*, chap. xxiii. 15.

After this, he calls them together a ſecond time, and gives them a brief hiſtorical account and deduction of

the great mercies of God to them and their fathers, from the days of Abraham, whom he had called out from among his idolatrous kindred and countrymen, unto that day.

From the conſideration of all which, he earneſtly exhorts them to renew their covenant with God; and, for his particular ſatisfaction, before he left the world, ſolemnly to promiſe that they would for ever ſerve God, and forſake the ſervice of idols: *Now therefore, fear the Lord, and ſerve him in ſincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers ſerved on the other ſide of the flood, and in Egypt: and ſerve ye the Lord*, chap. xxiv. 14.

And then, in the text, by a very elegant ſcheme of ſpeech, he does, as it were, once more ſet them at liberty; and, as if they had never engaged themſelves to God by covenant before, he leaves them to their free choice: *And if it ſeem evil unto you to ſerve the Lord, chuſe you this day whom ye will ſerve; whether the gods which your fathers ſerved, that were on the other ſide of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whoſe land ye dwell.*

Not that they were at liberty whether they would ſerve the true God or not; but to inſinuate to them, that religion ought to be their free choice: and likeways, that the true religion hath thoſe real advantages on its ſide, that it may ſafely be referred to any conſiderate man's choice: *If it ſeem evil unto you*; as if he had ſaid, if, after all the demonſtrations which God hath given of his miraculous preſence among you, and the mighty obligations which he hath laid upon you, by bringing you out of the land of Egypt, and the houſe of bondage, by ſo outſtretched an arm; and by driving out the nations before you, and giving you their land to poſſeſs: if, after all this, you can think it fit to quit the ſervice of this God, and to worſhip the idols of the nations whom you have ſubdued, thoſe vanquiſhed and baffled deities: if you can think it reaſonable ſo to do, but ſurely you cannot; then take your choice: *If it ſeem evil unto you to ſerve the Lord, chuſe you this day whom ye will ſerve.*

And to direct and encourage them to make a right choice, he declares to them his own reſolution, which he hopes will alſo be theirs; and as he had heretofore been their captain, ſo now he offers himſelf to be their example:

example: but whether they will follow him or not, he, for his part, is fixed and immoveable in this resolution; *But as for ME and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

In effect, he tells them, I have proposed the best religion to your choice; and I cannot but think, nay I cannot but hope, that you will all stedfastly adhere to it; it is so reasonable and wise, so much your interest and your happiness to do it. But if you should do otherways; if you should be so weak as not to discern the truth, so wilful and so wicked as not to embrace it: though you should all make another choice, and run away from the true God to the worship of idols, I for my part am stedfastly resolved what to do. In a case so manifest, in a matter so reasonable, no number, no example shall prevail with me to the contrary; I will, if need be, stand alone in that which is so evidently and unquestionably right; and though this whole nation should revolt all at once from the worship of the true God, and join with the rest of the world in a false religion, and in the worship of idols; and mine were the only family left in all Israel, nay in the whole world, that continued to worship the God of Israel, I would still be of the same mind; I would still persist in this resolution, and act according to it: *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

A resolution truly worthy of so great a prince and so good a man: in which he is a double pattern to us.

1. Of the brave resolution of a good man, namely, that if there were occasion, and things were brought to that extremity, he would stand alone in the profession and practice of the true religion: *As for ME, I will serve the Lord.*

2. Of the pious care of a good father and master of a family, to train up those under his charge in the true religion and worship of God: *As for me and MY HOUSE, we will serve the Lord.*

I shall, at this time, by God's assistance, treat of the first of these, namely,

First, Of the brave resolution of a good man, that, if there were occasion, and things were brought to that extremity, he would stand alone in the profession and practice of God's true religion: *Chuse you this day* (says Joshua) *whom ye will serve: but as for ME, I will serve*

the Lord. Joſhua here puts the caſe at the utmoſt extremity, that not only the great nations of the world, the Egyptians and Chaldeans, and all the leſſer nations round about them, and in whoſe land they dwelt, who were all long ſince revolted to idolatry, and pretended great antiquity and long preſcription for the worſhip of their falſe gods; but he ſuppoſeth yet further, that the only true and viſible church of God then known in the world, the people of Iſrael, ſhould likeways generally revolt, and forſake the worſhip of the true God, and cleave to the ſervice of idols: yet, in this caſe, if we could ſuppoſe it to happen, he declares his firm and ſtedfaſt reſolution to adhere to the worſhip of the true God; and tho' all others ſhould fall off from it, that he would ſtand alone in the profeſſion and practice of the true religion: *But as for ME, I will ſerve the Lord.*

In the handling of this argument, I ſhall do theſe two things.

1. I ſhall conſider the matter of this reſolution, and the due bounds and limits of it.

2. I ſhall endeavour to vindicate the reaſonableneſs of this reſolution, from the objections to which this ſingular and peremptory kind of reſolution may ſeem liable.

I. I ſhall conſider the matter of this reſolution, and the due bounds and limits of it.

1. The matter of this reſolution. Joſhua here reſolves, that if need were, and things were brought to that paſs, he would ſtand alone, or with very few adhering to him, in the profeſſion and practice of the true religion. And this is not a mere ſuppoſition of an impoſſible caſe, which can never happen: for it may, and hath really and in fact happened in ſeveral ages and places of the world.

There hath been a general apoſtaſy of ſome great part of God's church from the belief and profeſſion of the true religion to idolatry, and to damnable errors and hereſies: and ſome good men have, upon the matter, ſtood alone in the open profeſſion of the true religion, in the midſt of this general defection from it.

Elijah, in that general revolt of the people of Iſrael, when they had *forſaken the covenant of the Lord, and broken down his altars, and ſlain his prophets, and he only,* as

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he thought, *was left* to ſtand alone; I ſay, in this caſe, when, as he verily believed, he had no body to ſtand by him, *he was very jealous for the Lord God of Hoſts*; and with an undaunted courage ſtood up for the worſhip of the true God, and reproved Ahab to his face for his defection to the worſhip of idols, 1 Kings xviii. 18.

And thoſe three brave youths, in the prophecy of Daniel, chap. iii. did, in the like reſolute and undaunted manner, refuſe to obey the command of the great king Nebuchadnezzar, *to worſhip the image which he had ſet up*, when all others ſubmitted, and paid honour to it; telling him plainly, *If it be ſo, our God whom we ſerve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king: but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not ſerve thy gods, nor worſhip the golden image which thou haſt ſet up*, v. 17. 18.

In like manner, and with the ſame ſpirit and courage, Daniel withſtood the decree of Darius, which forbade men *to ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, ſave of the king only*, Dan. vi. 7. and this under the pain of being *caſt into the den of lions*: and when all others gave obedience to it, he *ſet open the windows of his chamber towards Jeruſalem, and kneeled down upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime*, v. 10.

In the prevalency of the Arian hereſy, Athanaſius almoſt ſtood alone in the profeſſion and maintenance of the truth. And in the reign of antichriſt, the true church of God is repreſented by a woman flying into the wilderneſs, and living there in obſcurity for a long time; inſomuch that the profeſſors of the truth ſhould hardly be found. And yet, during that degeneracy of ſo great a part of the chriſtian church, and the prevalency of antichriſt for ſo many ages, ſome few in every age did appear, who did reſolutely own the truth, and bear witneſs to it with their blood: but theſe did almoſt ſtand alone and by themſelves, like a few ſcattered ſheep wandering up and down in a wide wilderneſs.

Thus, in the height of Popery, Wickliffe appeared here in England; and Hierome of Prague, and John Huſs in Germany and Bohemia. And in the beginning

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of the reformation, when Popery had quite over-run theſe Weſtern parts of the world, and ſubdued her enemies on every ſide, and antichriſt ſat ſecurely in the quiet poſſeſſion of his kingdom; Luther aroſe, a bold and rough man, but a fit wedge to cleave in ſunder ſo hard and knotty a block; and appeared ſtoutly againſt the groſs errors and corruptions of the church of Rome; and for a long time ſtood alone, and with a moſt invincible ſpirit and courage maintained his ground, and reſiſted the united malice and force of antichriſt and his adherents; and gave him ſo terrible a wound, that he is not yet perfectly healed and recovered of it.

So that for a man to ſtand alone, or with a very few adhering to him, and ſtanding by him, is not a mere imaginary ſuppoſition, but a caſe that hath really and in fact happened in ſeveral ages and places of the world. Let us then proceed to conſider, in the

2. Second place, the due limits and bounds of this peremptory reſolution. In all matters of faith and practice which are plain and evident either from natural reaſon, or from divine revelation, this reſolution ſeems to be very reaſonable: but in things doubtful, a modeſt man, and every man hath reaſon to be ſo, would be very apt to be ſtaggered by the judgment of a very wiſe man, and much more of many ſuch; and eſpecially by the unanimous judgment of the generality of men; the general voice and opinion of mankind being next to the voice of God himſelf.

For, in matters of an indifferent nature, which God hath neither commanded nor forbidden, ſuch as are many of the circumſtances and ceremonies of God's worſhip, a man would not be ſingular, much leſs ſtiff and immoveable in his ſingularity; but would be apt to yield and ſurrender himſelf to the general vote and opinion, and to comply with the common cuſtom and practice; and much more with the rules and conſtitutions of authority, whether civil or eccleſiaſtical; becauſe in things lawful and indifferent, we are bound by the rules of decency and civility not to thwart the general practice; and by the commands of God we are certainly obliged to obey the lawful commands of lawful authority.

But in things plainly contrary to evidence of ſenſe

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or reason, or to the word of God, a man would compliment no man, or number of men: nor would he pin his faith upon any church in the world; much less upon any single man, no not the Pope; no though there were never so many probable arguments brought for the proof of his infallibility.

In this case a man would be singular, and stand alone against the whole world; against the wrath and rage of a King, and all the terrors of his fiery furnace: as in other matters, a man would not believe all the learned men in the world against the clear evidence of sense and reason. If all the great mathematicians of all ages, Archimedes, and Euclid, and Appollonius, and Diophantus, &c. could be supposed to meet together in a general council, and should there declare in the most solemn manner, and give it under their hands and seals, that twice two did not make four, but five; this would not move me in the least to be of their mind; nay, I, who am no mathematician, would maintain the contrary, and would persist in it, without being in the least startled by the positive opinion of these great and learned men; and should most certainly conclude, that they were either all of them out of their wits, or that they were biassed by some interest or other, and swayed, against the clear evidence of truth, and the full conviction of their own reason, to make such a determination as this. They might indeed over-rule the point by their authority, but in my inward judgment I should be still where I was before.

Just so, in matters of religion, if any church, though with never so glorious and confident a pretence to infallibility, should declare for transubstantiation; that is, that the bread and wine in the sacrament, by virtue of the consecration of the priest, are substantially changed into the natural body and blood of Christ; this is so notoriously contrary both to the sense and reason of mankind, that a man should chuse to stand single in the opposition of it, and laugh at, or rather pity the rest of the world that could be so servilely blind, as seemingly to conspire in the belief of so monstrous an absurdity.

And, in like manner, if any church should declare, that images are to be worshipped, or that the worship of God is to be performed in an unknown tongue; and that

that the Holy Scriptures, which contain the word and will of God, and teach men what they are to believe and do in order to their eternal ſalvation, are to be locked up, and kept concealed from the people, in a language which they do not underſtand, leſt, if they were permitted the free uſe of them in their mother tongue, they ſhould know more of the mind and will of God than is convenient for the common people to know, whoſe devotion and obedience to the church does mainly depend upon their ignorance; or ſhould declare, that the ſacrifice of Chriſt was not offered once for all, but is, and ought to be repeated ten millions of times every day; and that the people ought to receive the communion in one kind only, and the cup by no means to be truſted with them, for fear the profane beards of the laity ſhould drink of it; and that the ſaving efficacy of the ſacraments doth depend upon the intention of the prieſt, without which the receiver can have no benefit by them: theſe are all of them ſo plainly contrary to ſcripture, and moſt of them in reaſon ſo abſurd, that the authority of no church whatſoever can oblige a man to the belief of them.

Nay, I go yet further, that, being evidently contrary to the doctrine of the goſpel, though an Apoſtle, or an angel from heaven ſhould declare them, we ought to reject them. And for this I have St. Paul's authority and warrant; who, ſpeaking of ſome that *perverted the goſpel of Chriſt*, by teaching things contrary to it, *Though we*, (ſays he) *or an angel from heaven, preach any other goſpel unto you, than that which we have preached nnto you, let him be accurſed. As we ſaid before, ſo ſay I now again*, Though an Apoſtle, *though an angel from heaven, preach any other goſpel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accurſed*, Gal. i. 7, 8, 9. You ſee he repeats it over again, to expreſs not only his own confident aſſurance, but the certainty of the thing. And here is an anathema with a witneſs, which we may confidently oppoſe to all the anathema's which the council of Trent hath ſo liberally denounced againſt all thoſe who ſhall preſume to gainſay theſe new doctrines of their church; which are in truth *another goſpel* than that which our bleſſed Saviour and his Apoſtles taught: and yet, on their ſide,

ſide, there is neither an Apoſtle, nor an angel from heaven in the caſe.

To give but one inſtance more: If Bellarmine ſhall tell me, as he expreſsly does, that "if the Pope ſhould declare virtue to be vice, and vice to be virtue, I were "bound to believe him, unleſs I would ſin againſt conſcience;" and if all the world ſhould ſay the ſame that Bellarmine does, namely, that this infallible declarer of virtue and vice were to be believed and followed: yet I could not poſſibly be of their mind; for this plain and undeniable reaſon, Becauſe if virtue and vice be all one, then religion is nothing; ſince the main deſign of religion is, to teach men the difference between virtue and vice, and to oblige them to practiſe the one, and to refrain from the other: and if religion be nothing, then heaven and hell are nothing: and if heaven be nothing, then an infallible guide thither is of no uſe, and to no manner of purpoſe; becauſe he is a guide no whither, and ſo his great office ceaſes and falls of itſelf.

And now, leſt any ſhould think me ſingular in this aſſertion, and that thereby I give a great deal too much to the ſingle judgment of private perſons, and too little to the authority of a church, I will produce the deliberate judgment of a very learned man, and a great aſſerter of the church's authority, concerning the matter I am now ſpeaking of: I mean Mr. Hooker, in his deſervedly admired book *of eccleſiaſtical polity*. His words are theſe: "I grant (ſays he) that proof derived from "the authority of man's judgment, is not able to work "that aſſurance which doth grow by a ſtronger proof: "and therefore, although ten thouſand general councils "ſhould ſet down one and the ſame definitive ſentence "concerning any point of religion whatſoever; yet one "demonſtrative reaſon alledged, or one teſtimony cited "from the word of God himſelf, to the contrary, could "not chuſe but overſway them all; inaſmuch as for "them to be deceived, is not ſo impoſſible, as it is "that demonſtrative reaſon or divine teſtimony ſhould "deceive."

And again, "For men (ſays he) to be tied and led "by authority, as it were with a kind of captivity of "judgment, and though there be reaſon to the contra-

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" ry, not to liſten to it, but to follow like beaſts the firſt " in the herd, this were brutiſh."

Again, " That the authority of men ſhould prevail " with men, either againſt or above reaſon, is no part " of our belief. Companies of learned men, though " they be never ſo great and reverend, are to yield unto " reaſon; the weight whereof is no whit prejudiced by " the ſimplicity of the perſon which doth alledge it; but " being found to be ſound and good, the bare opinion " of men to the contrary muſt of neceſſity ſtoop and give " place." And this he delivers, not only as his own particular judgment, but that which he apprehended to be the judgment of the church of England.

I have produced theſe clear and poſitive teſtimonies of ſo learned and judicious a perſon, and of ſo great eſteem in our church, on purpoſe to prevent any miſapprehenſion, as if by this diſcourſe I intended to derogate from the authority of the church, and her juſt and reaſonable determinations, in things no ways contrary to plain reaſon or the word of God. And beyond this pitch no judicious Proteſtant, that I know of, ever ſtrained the authority of the church. I proceed now, in the

II. Second place, to vindicate the reaſonableneſs of this reſolution, from the objections to which this ſingular and peremptory kind of reſolution may ſeem liable: As,

1. I may very ſpecioufly be ſaid, that this does not ſeem modeſt for a man to ſet up his own private judgment againſt the general ſuffrage and vote. And it is very true, as I ſaid before, that about things indifferent a man ſhould not be ſtiff and ſingular; and in things doubtful and obſcure, a man ſhould not be over-confident of his own judgment, and inſiſt peremptorily upon it, againſt the general opinion. But in things that are plain and evident, either from ſcripture or reaſon, it is neither immodeſty, nor a culpable ſingularity, for a man to ſtand alone in the defence of the truth; becauſe, in ſuch a caſe, a man does not oppoſe his own ſingle and private judgment to the judgment of many, but the common reaſon of mankind, and the judgment of God plainly declared in his word.

If the generality of men ſhould turn Atheiſts and infidels, and ſhould deny the being of God, or his providence;

dence; the immortality of mens ſouls, and the rewards and puniſhments of another world; or ſhould deny the truth of the goſpel, and of the chriſtian religion: it would not certainly be any breach of modeſty for a man to appear ſingle, if no body elſe would ſtand by him, in the reſolute defence of theſe great truths.

In like manner, when a whole church, though never ſo large and numerous, ſhall conſpire together to corrupt the chriſtian religion, ſo far as to impoſe upon mankind, under the name of chriſtian doctrines and articles of faith, things plainly contrary to the ſenſe and reaſon of mankind, and to the clear and expreſs word of God, why muſt a man needs be thought immodeſt, if he oppoſe ſuch groſs errors and corruptions of the chriſtian doctrine? And what reaſon have the church of Rome to talk of modeſty in this caſe, when they themſelves have the face to impoſe upon mankind the belief of things contrary to what they and every man elſe ſees, as they do in their doctrine of tranſubſtantiation; and to require of them to do what God hath expreſsly forbidden, as in the worſhip of images, beſides a great many other idolatrous practices of that church; to deny the people the free uſe of the Holy Scriptures, and the public ſervice of God in a known tongue, contrary to the very end and deſign of all religion, and in affront to the common reaſon and liberty of mankind?

2. It is pretended, that it is more prudent for private perſons to err with the church, than to be ſo pertinacious in their own opinions. To which I anſwer, That it may indeed be pardonable in ſome caſes to be led into miſtake by the authority of thoſe to whoſe judgment and inſtruction we ought to pay a great deference and ſubmiſſion; provided always it be in things which are not plain and neceſſary: but ſurely it can never be prudent, to err with any number, how great ſoever, in matters of religion which are of moment, merely for number's ſake. But to comply with the known errors and corruptions of any church whatſoever, is certainly damnable.

3. It is pretended yet further, that men ſhall ſooner be excuſed in following the church, than any particular man or ſect. To this I anſwer, That it is very true, if the matter be doubtful; and eſpecially if the probabili-

ties be equal, or near equal on both ſides: but, if the error be groſs and palpable, it will be no excuſe to have followed any number of men, or any church whatſoever. For here the competition is not between men and men, but between God and men; and, in this caſe, we muſt forſake all men to follow God and his truth. "Thou ſhalt in no ways follow a multitude in a known error," is a rule which in reaſon is of equal obligation with that divine law, *Thou ſhalt in no ways follow a multitude to do evil*; or rather is comprehended in it, becauſe to comply with a known error is certainly to *do evil*.

And this very objection the Jews made againſt our bleſſed Saviour, and the doctrine which he taught, that the guides and governors of the Jewiſh church did utterly differ from him, and were of a contrary mind: *Have any of the rulers* (ſaid they) *believed on him?* What? will you be wiſer than your rulers and governors? what? follow the doctrine of one ſingle man againſt the unanimous judgment and ſentence of the great Sanhedrim, to whom the trial of doctrines and pretended prophets doth of right belong?

But, as plauſible as this objection may ſeem to be, it is to be conſidered, that, in a corrupt and degenerate church, the guides and rulers of it are commonly the worſt, and the moſt deeply engaged in the errors and corruptions of it. They brought them in at firſt; and their ſucceſſors, who have been bred up in the belief and practice of them, are concerned to uphold and maintain them: and ſo long a preſcription gives a kind of ſacred ſtamp even to error, and an authority not to be oppoſed and reſiſted.

And thus it was in the corrupt ſtate of the Jewiſh church in our Saviour's time; and ſo likewiſe in that great degeneracy of the chriſtian church, in the times of Popery, *their rulers made them to err*; inſomuch that when Martin Luther appeared in oppoſition to the errors and ſuperſtitions of that church, and was hard preſſed with this very objection which the Phariſees urged againſt our Saviour, he was forced to bolt out a kind of unmannerly truth, *Religio nunquam magis periclitatur quàm inter Reverendiſſimos:* "Religion (ſays he) is never "in greater hazard and worſe treated, than amongſt "the

" the Moſt Reverend ;" meaning the Pope and his Cardinals, and all the Romiſh hierarchy who had their dependence upon them.

4. It is objected, That as, on the one hand, there may be danger of error in following blindly the belief of the church, ſo, on the other hand, there is as great a danger of ſchiſm in forſaking the communion of the church, upon pretence of errors and corruptions. Very true: but where great errors and corruptions are not only pretended, but are real and evident; and where our compliance with thoſe errors and corruptions is made a neceſſary condition of our communion with that church: in that caſe, the guilt of ſchiſm, how great a crime ſoever it be, doth not fall upon thoſe who forſake the communion of that church, but upon thoſe who drive them out of it by the ſinful conditions which they impoſe upon them.

And this is truly the caſe between us and the church of Rome; as we are ready to make good, and have fully done it upon all occaſions; and they have never yet been able to vindicate and clear themſelves of thoſe groſs errors and corruptions which have been charged upon them; and which they require of all their members, as neceſſary conditions of communion with them here, and of eternal ſalvation hereafter.

For we do not object to them doubtful matters, but things as plain as any that are contained in the Bible; as every body would ſee, if they durſt but let every body read it. The worſhip of images is there as plainly forbidden in the decalogue, as murder and adultery are. The communion in both kinds is as expreſs an inſtitution of our Saviour, as any in all the New Teſtament; and even as the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper itſelf: only that church pretends to a diſpenſing power, as a privilege inherent in their church, and inſeparable from it.

And, to add but one inſtance more, public prayers and the ſervice of God in an unknown tongue, are as plainly and fully declared againſt by St Paul, in a long chapter upon this ſingle argument, as any one thing in all his epiſtles.

Theſe things are plain and undeniable; and being

ſo, are a full juſtification, not only of the church of England, in the reformation which ſhe thought fit to make within herſelf, from the groſs errors and corruptions of the church of Rome; but likewiſe of particular perſons, who have at any time, for the ſame reaſons, withdrawn themſelves from her communion, in any of the Popiſh countries; yea though that ſingle perſon ſhould happen to be in thoſe circumſtances, that he could not have the opportunity of holding communion with any other church that was free from thoſe errors and corruptions, and which did not impoſe them as neceſſary conditions of communion.

For if any church fall off to idolatry, every good Chriſtian not only may, but ought to forſake her communion; and ought rather to ſtand ſingle and alone in the profeſſion of the pure and true religion, than to continue in the communion of a corrupt and idolatrous church.

I know, that ſome men are ſo fond of the name of a church, that they can very hardly believe, that any thing which bears that glorious title can miſcarry, or do any thing ſo much amiſs, as to give juſt occaſion to any of her members to break off from her communion. What? the church err? That is ſuch an abſurdity as is by many thought ſufficient to put any objection out of countenance. That the whole church, that is, that all the Chriſtians in the world, ſhould at any time fall off to idolatry, and into errors and practices directly contrary to the Chriſtian doctrine revealed in the Holy Scriptures, is on all hands, I think, denied: but that any particular church may fall into ſuch errors and practices, is, I think, as univerſally granted; only in this caſe they demand to have the Roman Catholic church excepted. And why, I pray? Becauſe though the Roman church is a particular church, it is alſo the univerſal church. If this can be, and good ſenſe can be made of a particular univerſal church, then the Roman church may demand this high privilege, of being exempted from the fate of all other churches; but if the Roman Catholic, that is, a particular univerſal church, be a groſs and palpable contradiction, then it is plain, that the church of Rome hath

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no more pretence to this privilege, than any other particular church whatsoever.

And, which is yet more, some men talk of these matters at that rate, as if a man who thought himself obliged to quit the communion of the church of Rome, should happen to be in those circumstances that he had no opportunity of joining himself to any other communion, he ought in that case to give over all thoughts of religion, and not be so conceited and presumptuous as to think of going to heaven alone by himself.

It is, without doubt, a very great sin to despise the communion of the church, or to break off from it, so long as we can continue in it without sin: but if things should once come to that pass, that we must either disobey God for company, or stand alone in our obedience to him, we ought most certainly to obey God, whatever comes of it; and to profess his truth, whether any body else will join with us in that profession or not.

And they who speak otherwise, condemn the whole reformation; and do in effect say, that Martin Luther had done a very ill thing in breaking off from the church of Rome, if no body else would have joined with him in that honest design. And yet, if it had been so, I hope God would have given him the grace and courage to have stood alone in so good and glorious a cause, and to have laid down his life for it.

And for any man to be of another opinion, is just as if a man, upon great deliberation, should chuse rather to be drowned, than to be saved either by a plank or a small boat; or to be carried into the harbour any other way, than in a great ship of so many hundred tuns.

In short, a good man must resolve to obey God, and to profess his truth, though all the world should happen to do otherwise. Christ hath promised to preserve his church to the end of the world; that is, he hath engaged his word, that he will take care that there shall always be, in some part of the world or other, some persons that shall make a sincere profession of his true religion.

But he hath no where promised to preserve any one

part of his church from ſuch errors and corruptions, as may oblige all good men to quit the communion of that part; yea, though when they have done ſo, they may not know whither to reſort for actual communion with any other ſound part of the chriſtian church, as it happened to ſome particular perſons, during the reign and rage of Popery in theſe Weſtern parts of the chriſtian church.

The reſult from all this diſcourſe is, to confirm and eſtabliſh us all, in this *hour of temptation*, and of *the powers of darkneſs*, in the well-grounded belief of the neceſſity and juſtice of our reformation from the errors and corruptions of the Roman church, and to engage us to *hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering:* and not only to profeſs and promiſe, as Peter did to our Lord, *Though all men forſake thee, yet will not I:* but, if there ſhould be occaſion, to perform and make good this promiſe with the hazard of all that is dear to us, and even of life itſelf; and whatever trials God may permit any of us to fall into, to take up the pious reſolution of Joſhua here in the text, that, whatever others do, *we will ſerve the Lord.*

I will conclude my diſcourſe upon this firſt particular in the text, with the exhortation of St. Paul to the Philippians, chap. i. 27, 28. *Only let your converſation be as it becometh the goſpel of Chriſt, Stand faſt in one ſpirit, with one mind, ſtriving together for the faith of the goſpel; in nothing terrified by your adverſaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of ſalvation, and that of God.*

And thus much may ſuffice to have ſpoken to the firſt thing in the text; namely, the pious reſolution of Joſhua, that if there were occaſion, and things were brought to that extremity, he would ſtand alone in the profeſſion and practice of God's true religion: *Chuſe you this day whom ye will ſerve: but as for ME, I will ſerve the Lord.*

I ſhould now have proceeded to the ſecond thing, and which indeed I chiefly intended to ſpeak to from this text; namely, the pious care of a good father and maſter of a family, to train up thoſe under his charge in the religion and worſhip of the true God: *As for me and MY HOUSE,*

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we will serve the Lord. But this I shall not now enter upon; but defer it to some other opportunity. *Consider what ye have heard, and the Lord give you understanding in all things.*

SERMON L.

Concerning family religion.

Preached at St. Lawrence-Jewry, July 13. 1684.

JOSHUA xxiv. 15.

——*But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

The second sermon on this text.

I Shall now proceed to the *Second* point contained in the text, namely,

The pious care of a good master and father of a family, to train up those under his charge in the worship and service of the true God: *As for me and* MY HOUSE, *we will serve the Lord.*

And this is the more necessary to be spoken to, because it is a great and very essential part of religion, but strangely overlooked and neglected in this loose and degenerate age in which we live. It is a great part of religion; for, next to our personal homage and service to almighty God, and the care of our own souls, it is incumbent upon us to make those who are under our charge, and subject to our authority, God's subjects, and his children and servants; which is a much more honourable and happy relation, that that which they bear to us.

Our children are a natural part of ourselves, and the rest of our family are a civil and political part; and not only ourselves, but all that we have, and that belongs to us, is God's, and ought to be devoted to his service. And they that have the true fear of God themselves, will

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be careful to teach it to others; to those especially who are under their more immediate care and instruction. And therefore God had so great a confidence concerning Abraham as to this particular, as to undertake for him, that, being so very good a man himself, he would not fail in so great and necessary a part of his duty: *For I know him* (says God of him) *that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.* God passeth his word for him, that he would not only take care to instruct his children, and the rest of his numerous family, in the true religion; but that he would likeways lay a strict charge upon them to propagate and transmit it to their posterity.

And this certainly is the duty of all fathers and masters of families; and an essential part of religion, next to serving God in our own persons, to be very careful that all that belong to us do the same. For every man must not only give an account of himself to God, but of those likeways that are committed to his charge, that they do not miscarry through this neglect.

In speaking of this great and necessary duty, I shall do these four things.

1. I shall shew wherein it doth consist.

2. I shall consider our obligation to it, both in point of duty and of interest.

3. I shall enquire into the causes of the so common and shameful neglect of this duty, to the exceeding great decay of piety amongst us.

4. As a motive and argument to us to endeavour to retrieve the practice of this duty, I shall represent to you the pernicious consequences of the neglect of it, both with regard to ourselves, and to the public. In all which I shall be very brief, because things that are plain need not to be long.

I. I shall shew wherein the practice of this duty doth consist. And in this I am sure there is no need to be long, because this duty is much better known than practised. The principal parts of it are these following.

1. By setting up the constant worship of God in our families; by daily prayers to God every morning and evening, and by reading some portion of the Holy Scriptures

tures at thoſe times, eſpecially out of the Pſalms of David, and the New Teſtament. And this is ſo neceſſary to keep alive and to maintain a ſenſe of God and religion in the minds of men, that where it is neglected, I do not ſee how any family can in reaſon be eſteemed a family of Chriſtians, or indeed to have any religion at all.

And there are not wanting excellent helps to this purpoſe for thoſe that ſtand in need of them, as I think moſt families do for the due and decent diſcharge of this ſolemn duty of prayer; I ſay, there are excellent helps to this purpoſe in the ſeveral books of devotion calculated for the private uſe of families, as well as for ſecret prayer in our cloſets.

So that, beſides the reading of the Holy Scriptures, which are the great fountains of divine truth, we may do well likeways to add to theſe, other pious and profitable books, which, by their plainneſs, are fitted for the inſtruction of all capacities in the moſt neceſſary points of belief and practice; of which ſort, God be thanked, there is an abundant ſtore: but none that I think is more fitted for general and conſtant uſe, than that excellent book ſo well known by the title of *The whole duty of man*; becauſe it is conveniently divided into parts or ſections; one of which may be read in the family at any time when there is leiſure for it, but more eſpecially on the Lord's day, when the whole family may the more eaſily be brought and kept together, and have the opportunity to attend upon theſe things without diſtraction.

And, which I muſt by no means omit, becauſe it is in many families already gone, and in others going out of faſhion; I mean, a ſolemn acknowledgment of the providence of God, by begging his bleſſing at our meals upon his good creatures provided for our uſe, and by returning thanks to him for the benefit and refreſhment of them: this being a piece of natural religion owned and practiſed in all ages, and in moſt places of the world, but never ſo ſhamefully and ſcandalouſly neglected, and I fear by many ſlighted and deſpiſed, as it is amongſt us at this day; and moſt neglected where there is greateſt reaſon for the doing of it, I mean, at the moſt plentiful tables, and among thoſe of higheſt quality; as if great perſons were aſhamed, or thought ſcorn to own from whence

whence these blessings come; like the nation of the Jews, of whom God complains in the Prophet, Hos. ii. 8. *She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold. She did not know*; that is, she would not acknowledge from whose bounty all these blessings came: or as if the poor were obliged to thank God for a little, but those who are fed to the full, and whose cups overflow, so that they are almost every day surfeited of plenty, were not at least equally bound to make returns of thankful acknowledgment to the great giver of all good things; and to implore his bounty and blessing, upon whom *the eyes of all do wait*, that *he may give them their meat in due season.*

O crooked and perverse generation! Do you thus reason? *Do ye thus requite the Lord, foolish and unwise?* This is a very sad and broad sign of the prevalency of Atheism and infidelity among us, when so natural and so reasonable a piece of religion, so meet and equal an acknowledgment of the constant and daily care and providence of Almighty God towards us, begins to grow out of date and use, in a nation professing religion, and the belief of the being and providence of God. Is it not a righteous thing with God to take away his blessings from us, when we deny him this just and easy tribute of praise and thanksgiving? *Shall not God visit for this* horrible ingratitude? *and shall not his soul be avenged on such a nation as this? Hear, O heavens, and be horribly astonished at this!* I hope it cannot be thought misbecoming the meanest of God's ministers, in a matter wherein the honour of God is so nearly concerned, to reprove, even in the highest and greatest of the sons of men, so shameful and heinous a fault, with a proportionable vehemence and severity.

2. Another, and that also a very considerable part of this duty, consists in instructing those committed to our charge in the fundamental principles, and in the careful practice of the necessary duties of religion; instilling these into children in their tender years, as they are capable of them, *line upon line*, and *precept upon precept, here a little and there a little*; and into those that are more grown up, by proper and suitable means of instruction, and by furnishing them with such books as are

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moſt proper to teach them thoſe things in religion which are moſt neceſſary by all to be believed and practiſed.

And in order hereunto, we ſhould take care that thoſe under our charge, our children and ſervants, ſhould be taught to read; becauſe this will make the buſineſs of inſtruction much eaſier; ſo that, if they are diligent, and well diſpoſed, they may, after having been taught the firſt principles of religion, by reading the Holy Scriptures, and other good books, greatly improve themſelves, ſo as to be prepared to receive much greater benefit and advantage by the public teaching of their miniſters.

And in this work of inſtruction, our great care ſhould be, to plant thoſe principles of religion in our children and ſervants, which are moſt fundamental and neceſſary, and are like to have the greateſt and moſt laſting influence upon their whole lives: As, right and worthy apprehenſions of God, eſpecially of his infinite goodneſs, and that *he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*; and a lively ſenſe alſo of the great evil and danger of ſin; a firm belief of the immortality of our ſouls, and of the unſpeakable and endleſs rewards and puniſhments of another world. If theſe principles once take root, they will ſpread ſtrangely, and probably ſtick by them, and continue with them all their days.

Whereas, if we plant in them doubtful doctrines and opinions, and inculcate upon them the notions of a ſect, and the jargon of a party, this will turn to a very pitiful account, and we muſt expect that our harveſt will be anſwerable to our husbandry: *We have ſown the wind, and ſhall reap the whirlwind.* But of this I ſhall have occaſion to ſpeak more particularly and fully in the enſuing ſermons concerning the good education of children.

And this work of inſtruction of thoſe that are under our charge, as it ought not to be neglected at other times, ſo it is more peculiarly ſeaſonable on the Lord's day; which ought to be employed by us to religious purpoſes, and in the exerciſes of piety and devotion, chiefly in the public worſhip and ſervice of God; upon which we ſhould take care, that our children and ſervants ſhould diligently and devoutly attend; becauſe there God affords the means which he hath appointed for the begetting and increaſing of piety and goodneſs, and to which

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he hath promiſed a more eſpecial bleſſing; there they will have the opportunity of joining in the public prayers of God's church, and of ſharing in the unſpeakable benefit and advantage of them; and there they will alſo have the advantage of being inſtructed by the miniſters of God in the doctrine of ſalvation, and the way to eternal life, and of being powerfully incited to the practice of piety and virtue.

There likeways they will be invited to the Lord's table, to participate of the holy ſacrament of Chriſt's moſt bleſſed body and blood; which being the moſt ſolemn inſtitution of the chriſtian religion, the frequent participation whereof is, by our bleſſed Lord, in remembrance of his dying love, injoined upon all Chriſtians, we ought to take a very particular care, that thoſe who are under our charge, ſo ſoon as they are capable of it, be duly inſtructed and prepared for it; that ſo, as often as opportunity is offered for it, they may be preſent at this holy action, and partake of the ineſtimable benefits and comforts of it.

And when the public worſhip of that day is over, our families ſhould be inſtructed at home, by having the ſcriptures and other good books read to them: and care likeways ſhould be taken, that they do this themſelves; this being the chief opportunity that moſt of them, eſpecially thoſe that are ſervants, have of minding the buſineſs of religion, and thinking ſeriouſly of another world.

And therefore I cannot but think it of very great conſequence to the maintaining and keeping alive of religion in the world, that this day be religiouſly obſerved, and ſpent as much as may be in the exerciſes of piety, and in the care of our ſouls. For ſurely every one that hath a true ſenſe of religion, will grant, that it is neceſſary that ſome time ſhould be ſolemnly ſet apart for this purpoſe, which is of all other our greateſt concernment. And they who neglect this ſo proper ſeaſon and opportunity, will hardly find any other time for it; eſpecially thoſe who are under the government and command of others, as children and ſervants, who are ſeldom upon any other day allowed to be ſo much maſters of their time as upon this day.

3. I add further, as a conſiderable part of the duty of parents

parents and masters of families, if they be desirous to have their children and servants religious in good earnest, and would set them forward in the way to heaven, that they do not only allow them time and opportunity, but that they do also strictly and earnestly charge them to retire themselves every day, but more especially on the Lord's day, morning and evening, to pray to God for the forgiveness of their sins, and for his mercy and blessing upon them; and likeways to praise him for all his favours and benefits conferred upon them from day to day.

And, in order to this, they ought to take care, that their children and servants be furnished with such short forms of prayer and praise as are proper and suitable to their capacities and conditions respectively; because there are but very few that know how to set about and perform these duties, especially at first, without some helps of this kind.

4. And lastly, Another principal part of this duty consists in giving good example to our families. This was David's resolution, Psal. ci. 2. *I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way; I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.* Take great care to be exemplary to thy family in the best things; in a constant and devout serving of God, and in a sober, and prudent, and unblameable conversation.

One of the best and most effectual ways to make those who are under our care and authority good, is to be good ourselves, and, by our good example, to shew them the way to be so. Without this our best instructions will signify but very little, and the main force and efficacy of them will be lost. We undermine the best instructions we can give, when they are not seconded and confirmed by our own example and practice. The want of this will weaken the authority of all our good counsel, and very little reverence and obedience will be paid to it. The precepts and admonitions of a very good man have in them a great power of persuasion, and are apt strongly to move and inflame others to *go and do likeways:* but the good instructions of a bad man are languid and faint, and of very little force; because they give no heart and encouragement to follow that counsel, which they see he

that gives it does not think fit to take himself. But of this likeways I shall have occasion to speak more fully in the following discourses, concerning the good education of children. And thus much may suffice to have spoken of the first thing which I proposed, namely, Wherein the practice of this duty doth consist. I proceed to the second, namely,

II. To consider our obligation to it, both in point of duty and of interest.

1. In point of duty. All authority over others is a talent intrusted with us by God, for the benefit and good of others, and for which we are accountable, if we do not improve it, and make use of it to that end. We are obliged, by all lawful means, to provide for the temporal welfare of our family, to feed and clothe their bodies, and to give them a comfortable subsistence here in the world: and surely much more are we obliged to take care of their souls, and to consult their eternal happiness in another life; in comparison of which all temporal concernments and considerations are as nothing.

It would be accounted a very barbarous thing in a father or master, to suffer a child to starve for want of the necessaries of life, food and raiment; and all the world would cry shame upon them for it: but how much greater cruelty must it in reason be thought, to let an immortal soul, and one *for whom Christ died*, perish for want of knowledge and necessary instruction for the attaining of eternal salvation?

The Apostle St. Paul thinks no words bad enough for those who neglect the temporal welfare of their families: *He that provideth not* (saith he) *for his own, especially for those of his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel*; that is, he does not deserve the name of a Christian, who neglects a duty to which, from the plain dictates of nature, a Heathen thinks himself obliged. What then shall be said for them who take no care to provide for the everlasting happiness, and to prevent the eternal misery and ruin of those who are so immediately under their charge, and so very nearly related to them?

We are obliged to procure the happiness of our children, not only by the laws of Christianity, but likeways by all the natural bonds of duty and affection. For our children

children are a part of ourſelves; and if they periſh by our fault and neglect, it will be a perpetual wound and ſting to us: their blood will be upon our heads, and the guilt of it will for ever lie at our doors.

Nay, we are obliged likeways in juſtice, and by way of reparation, to take all poſſible care of their happineſs: for we have conveyed a ſad inheritance to them, in thoſe corrupt and evil inclinations which they have derived from us; and therefore we ſhould, with the greateſt care and diligence, endeavour to rectify their perverſe natures, and to cure thoſe curſed diſpoſitions to evil which we have tranſmitted to them. And ſince God hath been pleaſed in ſo much mercy to provide, by the abundant grace of the goſpel, ſo powerful a remedy for this hereditary diſeaſe of our corrupt and degenerate nature, we ſhould do what in us lies, that they may partake of the bleſſing and benefit of it.

And as to other members of our family, whether they be ſervants, or other relations, of whom we have taken the charge, common humanity will oblige us to be concerned for their happineſs, as they are men, and of the ſame nature with ourſelves: and charity likeways, as they are Chriſtians, and baptized into the ſame faith, and capable of the ſame common ſalvation, does yet more ſtrictly oblige us by all means to endeavour that they may be made partakers of it; eſpecially ſince they are committed to our care, and for that reaſon we muſt expect to be accountable to God for them.

So that our obligation in point of duty is very clear and ſtrong; and if we be remiſs and negligent in the diſcharge of it, we can never anſwer it either to God or to our own conſciences: which I hope will awaken us all who are concerned in it, to the ſerious conſideration of it, and effectually engage us for the future, to the faithful and conſcientious performance of it.

2. We are hereto likeways obliged in point of intereſt; becauſe it is really for our ſervice and advantage, that thoſe that belong to us ſhould ſerve and fear God; religion being the beſt and ſureſt foundation of the duties of all relations, and the beſt caution and ſecurity for the true diſcharge and performance of them.

Would we have dutiful and obedient children, dili-

gent and faithful ſervants? nothing will ſo effectually oblige them to be ſo, as the fear of God and the principles of religion firmly ſettled and rooted in them. Abraham, who, by the teſtimony of God himſelf, was ſo eminent an example of this kind, both of a good father, and a good maſter of his family, found the good ſucceſs of his religious care in the happy effects of it, both upon his ſoon Iſaac, and his chief ſervant and ſteward of his houſe, Eliezer of Damaſcus.

What an unexampled inſtance of the moſt profound reſpect and obedience to the commands of his father did Iſaac give, when, without the leaſt murmuring or reluctancy, he ſubmitted to be bound, and laid upon the altar, and to have been ſlain for a ſacrifice, if God had not, by an angel ſent on purpoſe, interpoſed to prevent it?

What an admirable ſervant to Abraham was the ſteward of his houſe, Eliezer of Damaſcus? How diligent and faithful was he in his maſter's ſervice? ſo that he truſted him in his greateſt concernments, and with all that he had. And when he employed him in that great affair of the marriage of his ſon Iſaac, what pains did he take, what prudence did he uſe, what fidelity did he ſhew, in the diſcharge of that great truſt, giving himſelf no reſt till he had accompliſhed the buſineſs he was ſent about? God ſeems purpoſely to have left theſe two inſtances upon record in ſcripture, to encourage fathers and maſters of families to a religious care of their children and ſervants.

And to ſhew the power of religion to oblige men to their duty, I will add but one inſtance more. How did the fear of God ſecure Joſeph's fidelity to his maſter, in the caſe of a very great and violent temptation? When there was nothing elſe to reſtrain him from ſo lewd and wicked an act, and to which he was ſo powerfully tempted, the conſideration of the great truſt his maſter repoſed in him, and the ſenſe of his duty to him, but, above all, the fear of God, preſerved him from conſenting to ſo vile and wicked an action: *How can I* (ſays he) *do this great wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God?*

So that, in prudence, and from a wiſe conſideration of the great benefit and advantage which will thereby redound

found to us, we ought, with the greatest care, to instil the principles of religion into those that belong to us. For if the seeds of true piety be sown in them, we shall reap the fruits of it; and if this be neglected, we shall certainly find the mischief and inconvenience of it. If our children and servants be not taught to fear and reverence God, how can we expect that they should reverence and regard us? At least we can have no sure hold of them: for nothing but religion lays an obligation upon conscience: nor is there any other certain bond of duty, and obedience, and fidelity. Men will break loose from all other ties, when a fit occasion and a fair opportunity doth strongly tempt them. And as religion is necessary to procure the favour of God, and all the comfort and happiness which that brings along with it: so it is necessary likeways to secure the mutual duties and offices of men to one another. I proceed to the third thing which I proposed, namely,

III. To inquire into the causes of the so common and shameful neglect of this duty, to the exceeding great decay of piety among us. And this may in part be ascribed to our civil confusions and distractions, but chiefly to our dissensions and differences in religion; which have not only divided and scattered our parochial churches and congregations, but have entered likeways into our families, and made great disturbances and disorders there.

1. This may in good part be ascribed to our civil confusions and distractions, which for the time do lay all laws asleep; and do not only occasion a general licentiousness and dissoluteness of manners, but have usually proportionably bad influence upon the order and government of families, by weakening the authority of those that govern, and by giving the opportunity of greater licence to those that should be governed; for when public laws lose their authority, it is hard to maintain and keep up the strict rules and order of families; which, after great and long disorder, are very hard to be retrieved and recovered.

2. This great neglect and decay of religious order in families, is chiefly owing to our dissensions and differences in religion; upon occasion whereof, many, under the

pretence of conscience, have broke loose into a boundless liberty. So that, among the manifold ill consequences of our divisions in religion, this is none of the least, that the religious order of families hath been in a great measure broken and dissolved. Some will not meet at the same prayers in the family, nor go to the same church and place of public worship; and, upon that pretence, take the liberty to do what they please, and, under colour of serving God in a different way according to their consciences, do either wholly, or in great measure, neglect the worship of God: nay, it is well if they do not at that time haunt and frequent places of debauchery and lewdness; which they may safely do, being from under the eye of their parents and masters. However, by this means, it becomes impossible for the most careful masters of families, to take an account of those under their charge, how they spend their time on the Lord's day, and to train them up in any certain and orderly way of religion.

And this methinks is so great and sensible an inconvenience, and hath had such dismal effects in many families, as ought effectually to convince us of the necessity of endeavouring a greater union in matters of religion; and to put us in mind of those happy days when God was served in one way, and whole families went to the house of God in companies; and fathers and masters had their children and servants continually under their eye, and they were all united in their worship and devotion, both in their own houses, and in the house of God; and by this means the work of religious education and instruction was effectually carried on, and a steady authority and decent order was maintained in families; men were edified and built up in religion, and *God in all things was glorified.*

And we may assure ourselves, that till we are better agreed in matters of religion, and our unhappy and childish differences are laid aside, and till the public and unanimous worship of God do in some measure recover its reputation; the good order and government of families, as to the great ends of religion, is never likely to obtain and to have any considerable effect: which, I hope, will make all men who heartily love God and religion,

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to consider seriously how necessary it is to put an end to these differences; that in our private families, as well as in the public assemblies of the church, we may *with one mind and with one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

I beseech you therefore, *brethren,* (as St. Paul exhorts the Corinthians, 1 Cor. i. 10.) *by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment*; that is, so far as is necessary to the *keeping of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,* and to prevent divisions and separations among Christians. I proceed to the fourth and last thing I proposed, and which remains to be very briefly spoken to, namely,

IV. The very mischievous and fatal consequences of the neglect of this duty, both to the public, and to ourselves.

1. To the public. Families are the first seminaries of religion; and if care be not there taken to prepare persons, especially in their tender years, for public teaching and instruction, it is like to have but very little effect. The neglect of a due preparation of our children and servants at home, to make them capable of profiting by what they hear and may learn at church, is like an error in the first concoction, which can hardly ever be corrected afterwards. So that, in this first neglect, the foundation of an infinite mischief is laid; because if no care be taken of persons in their younger years, when they are most capable of the impressions of religion, how can it be reasonably expected that they should come to good afterwards? And if they continue void of the fear of God, which there hath been no care taken to plant in them, they will almost necessarily be bad in all relations; undutiful children, slothful and unfaithful servants, scandalous members of the church, unprofitable to the commonwealth, disobedient to governors both ecclesiastical and civil; and, in a word, burdens of the earth, and so many plagues of human society: and this evil, if no remedy be applied to it, will continually grow worse, and diffuse and spread itself farther in every age, till impiety and wickedness, infidelity and profaneness

profaneneſs have over-run all, and the world be ripe for its final ruin: juſt as it was before the deſtruction of the old world, when *the wickedneſs of man was great upon the earth*, and *all fleſh had corrupted their way*, then *the flood came, and ſwept them all away.*

2. The conſequences of this neglect will likewiſe be very diſmal to ourſelves. We ſhall firſt of all others feel the inconvenience, as we had the greateſt ſhare in the guilt of it. We can have no manner of ſecurity of the duty and fidelity of thoſe of our family to us, if they have no ſenſe of religion, no fear of God before their eyes. If we have taken no care to inſtruct them in their duty to God, it is no ways probable that they will make conſcience of their duty to us.

So that we ſhall have the firſt ill conſequences of their miſcarriage, beſides the ſhame and ſorrow of it: and not only ſo, but all the evil they commit ever after, will be in a great meaſure chargeable upon us, and will be put upon our ſcore in the judgment of the great day. It ought to make us tremble, to think with what bitterneſs and rage our children and ſervants will then fly in our faces, for having been the cauſe of their eternal ruin, for want of due care on our part to prevent it. In that day, next to God and our own conſciences, our moſt terrible accuſers will be thoſe of our own houſe, nay, thoſe that come out of our own bowels, and were not only part of our family, but even of ourſelves. But this alſo I ſhall have a proper occaſion to proſecute more fully in the following diſcourſes concerning the education of children, to which I refer it.

Upon all theſe conſiderations, and many more that might be urged upon us, we ſhould take up the pious reſolution of Joſhua here in the text, that *we and OUR HOUSES will ſerve the Lord*; and that, through God's grace, we will do all that in us lies, by our future care and diligence, to repair our former neglects in this kind.

I ſhall only add this one conſideration more, to all that I have already mentioned. If children were carefully educated, and families regularly and religiouſly ordered, what a happy and delightful place, what a paradiſe would this world be, in compariſon of what now it is? I be-

I beſeech you therefore, brethren, that theſe things, which I have with ſo much plainneſs and faithfulneſs laid before you, may ſink into your hearts before it be too late, and whilſt the thing may be remedied; that you may not for ever lament this neglect, and repent of it, when the thing will be paſt remedy, and there will be no place for repentance. *But I hope better things of you, brethren, and things that accompany ſalvation, though I thus ſpeak.*

SERMON LI.

Of the education of children.

PROV. xxii. 6.

Train up a child in the way he ſhould go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

The firſt ſermon on this text.

I Have on purpoſe choſen this text for the ſubject of a preparatory diſcourſe, in order to the reviving of that ſo ſhamefully neglected, and yet moſt uſeful and neceſſary duty of catechiſing children and young perſons: but I ſhall extend it to the conſideration of the education of children in general, as a matter of the greateſt conſequence, both to religion and the public welfare.

For we who are the miniſters of God, ought not only to inſtruct thoſe who are committed to our charge in the common duties of Chriſtianity, ſuch as belong to all Chriſtians; but likewiſe in all the particular duties which the ſeveral relations in which they ſtand to one another do reſpectively require and call for from them.

And amongſt all theſe, I know none that is of greater concernment to religion, and to the good order of the world, than the careful education of children. And there is hardly any thing that is more difficult, and which requires

quires a more prudent, and diligent, and conſtant application of our beſt care and endeavour.

It is a known ſaying of Melancthon, that there are three things which are extremely difficult, *parturire, docere, regere:* "to bear and bring forth children, to inſtruct and bring them up to be men, and to govern them when they arrive at man's eſtate." The inſtruction and good education of children is none of the leaſt difficult of theſe. For to do it to the beſt advantage, does not only require great ſagacity to diſcern their particular diſpoſition and temper, but great diſcretion to deal with them and manage them, and likewiſe continual care and diligent attendance to form them by degrees to religion and virtue.

It requires great wiſdom and induſtry to advance a conſiderable eſtate; much art, and contrivance, and pains, to raiſe a great and regular building: but the greateſt and nobleſt work in the world, and an effect of the greateſt prudence and care, is, to rear and build up a man, and to form and faſhion him to piety and juſtice, and temperance, and all kind of honeſt and worthy actions. Now, the foundations of this great work are to be carefully laid in the tender years of children, that it may riſe and grow up with them; according to the advice of the wiſe man here in the text, *Train up a child in the way he ſhould go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

In which words are contained theſe two things.

1. The duty of parents, and inſtructors of children: *Train up a child*, &c. By *childhood* here, I underſtand the age of perſons from their birth; but more eſpecially from their firſt capacity of inſtruction, till they arrive at the ſtate and age which next ſucceeds childhood, and which we call *youth*; and which is the proper ſeaſon for confirmation. For when children have been well catechized and inſtructed in religion, then is the fitteſt time for them to take upon themſelves, and in their own perſons, to confirm that ſolemn vow, which by their ſureties they made at their baptiſm.

Train up a child in the way he ſhould go; that is, in the courſe of life that he ought to lead; inſtruct him carefully in the knowledge and practice of his whole duty

to

to God and men, which he ought to observe and perform all the days of his life.

2. Here is the consequent fruit and benefit of good education: *And when he is old, he will not depart from it.* Thus we are to understand according to the moral probability of things: not as if this happy effect did always and infallibly follow upon the good education of a child; but that this very frequently is, and may probably be presumed and hoped to be the fruit and effect of a pious and prudent education. Solomon means, that from the very nature of the thing, this is the most hopeful and likely way to train up a child to be a good man. For, as Aristotle truly observes, moral sayings and proverbial speeches are to be understood only ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ; that is, to be usually and for the most part true. And though there may be several exceptions made, and instances given to the contrary; yet this doth not infringe the general truth of them. But if in frequent and common experience they be found true, this is all the truth that is expected in them, because it is all that was intended by them.

And of this nature is this aphorism or proverb of Solomon in the text; and so likewise are most of the wise sayings of this book of the Proverbs, as also of Ecclesiastes. And we do greatly mistake the design and meaning of them, whenever we go about to exact them to a more strict and rigorous truth, and shall, upon due consideration, find it impossible to bring them to it.

So that the true meaning of the text may be fully comprised in the following proposition:

That the careful, and prudent, and religious education of children hath for the most part a very good influence upon the whole course of their lives.

In the handling of this argument, I design, by God's assistance, to reduce my discourse to these five heads.

1. I shall shew more generally wherein the good education of children doth consist; and severally consider the principal parts of it.

2. I shall give some more particular directions for the management of this work, in such a way as may be most effectual for its end.

3. I

3. I shall take notice of some of the common and more remarkable miscarriages in the performance of this duty.

4. I shall endeavour to make out the truth of this proposition, by shewing how the good education of children comes to be of so great advantage, and to have so powerful and lasting an influence upon their whole lives.

5. And lastly, I shall, by the most powerful arguments I can offer, endeavour to stir up and persuade those whose duty this is, to discharge it with great care and conscience.

First, I shall shew more generally wherein the good education of children doth consist; and severally consider the principal parts of it. And under this head I shall comprehend promiscuously the duty of parents; and, in case of their death, of guardians; and of godfathers and godmothers; though this for the most part signifies very little more than a pious and charitable care and concernment for them; because the children for whom they are sureties, are seldom under their power: and the duty likewise of those who are the teachers and instructors of them: and the duty also of masters of families towards servants in their childhood and younger years: and lastly, the duty of ministers, under whose parochial care and inspection children are, as members of the families committed to their charge: I say, under this head I shall comprehend the duties of all these respectively, according to the several obligations which lie upon each of them in their several relations to them. And I shall reduce them to these eight particulars, as the principal parts wherein the education of children doth consist.

1. In the tender and careful nursing of them.

2. In bringing them to be baptized, and admitted members of Christ's church, at the times appointed or accustomed in the national church of which the parents are members.

3. In a due care to inform and instruct them in the whole compass of their duty to God and to their neighbour.

4. And

4. And more especially in a prudent and diligent care to form their lives and manners to religion and virtue.

5. In giving them good example.

6. In wise restraints from that which is evil, by seasonable reproof and correction.

7. In bringing them to be publicly catechised by the minister, in order to confirmation.

8. In bringing them to the bishop, to be solemnly confirmed, by their taking upon themselves the vow which, by their sureties, they entered into at their baptism.

I. In the tender and careful nursing of children. I mention this first, because it is the first and most natural duty incumbent upon parents towards their children: and this is particularly the duty of mothers. This affection and tenderness, nature, which is our surest guide and director, hath implanted in all living creatures towards their young ones; and there cannot be a greater reproach to creatures that are endued with reason, than to neglect a duty, to which nature directs even the brute creatures by a blind and unthinking instinct. So that it is such a duty, as cannot be neglected without a downright affront to nature; and from which nothing can excuse, but disability, or sickness, or the evident danger of the mother, or the interposition of the father's authority, or some very extraordinary and public necessity.

This, I foresee, will seem a very hard saying to nice and delicate mothers, who prefer their own ease and pleasure to the fruit of their own bodies: but whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, I think myself obliged to deal plainly in this matter, and to be so faithful as to tell them, that this is a natural duty; and because it is so, of a more necessary and indispensable obligation than any positive precept of revealed religion; and that the general neglect of it is one of the great and crying sins of this age and nation; and which, as much as any sin whatsoever, is evidently a punishment to itself, in the palpable ill effects and consequences of it; which I shall, as briefly as I can, endeavour to represent; that, if it be possible, we may in this first

point of education, so fundamental and necessary to the happiness both of parents and children, and consequently to the public good of human society, be brought to comply with the unerring instinct of nature, and with the plain dictate of the common reason of mankind, and the general practice of all ages and nations.

1. The neglect of this duty is a sort of exposing of children; especially when it is not done, as very often it is not, with more than ordinary care and choice. It always exposeth them to manifest inconvenience, and sometimes to great danger; even to that degree, as, in the consequence of it, is but little better than the laying a child in the streets, and leaving it to the care and compassion of a parish. There are two very visible inconveniences which do commonly attend it.

1*st*, Strange milk; which is often very disagreeable to the child, and with which the child to be sure sucks in the natural infirmities of the nurse, together with a great deal of her natural inclinations and irregular passions, which many times stick by the child for a long time after; and, which is worse than all this, it sometimes happens, that some secret disease of the nurse is conveyed to the child.

2*dly*, A shameful and dangerous neglect of the child, especially by such nurses as make a trade of it; of whom there are great numbers in and about this great city; who, after they have made their first and main advantage of the child, by the excessive, not to say extravagant vails, which usually here in England, above all other places in the world, are given at christenings; and then, by the strait allowances which are commonly made afterwards for the nursing and keeping of the child, are often tempted, not to say worse, to a great neglect of the child; which, if it happen to die for want of due care, sets the nurse at liberty to make a new advantage, by taking another child.

Nor can it well be otherwise expected, than that a nurse, who by this course is first made to be unnatural to her own child, should have no great care and tenderness for a child which is not her own.

I have heard a very sad observation made by those who have had the opportunity to know it, that, in several of the

the towns and villages about London, where this trade of nurſing children is chiefly driven, hardly one in five of theſe children lives out the year. And this ſurely is a danger, which natural affection, as well as duty, does oblige parents to take all poſſible care to prevent.

2. This courſe doth moſt certainly tend very much to the eſtranging and weakening of natural affection on both ſides: I mean, both on the part of the mother, and of the child. The pains of nurſing, as well as of bearing children, doth inſenſibly create a ſtrange tenderneſs of affection and care in the mother. *Can a woman* (ſays God) *forget her ſucking child, that ſhe ſhould not have compaſſion on the ſon of her womb?* Iſ. xlix. 15. *Can a woman?* that is, a mother, not a nurſe; for the *ſucking child* is ſaid to be *the ſon of her womb*. God ſpeaks of this as a thing next to impoſſible.

And this likewiſe is a great endearment of the mother to the child: which endearment, when the child is put out, is transferred from the mother to the nurſe, and many times continues to be ſo for a great many years after; yea, and often to that degree, as if the nurſe were the true mother, and the true mother a mere ſtranger. So that by this means natural affection muſt be extremely weakened: which is great pity; becauſe, when it is kept up in its full ſtrength, it often proves one of the beſt ſecurities of the duty of a child.

But becauſe this ſevere doctrine will go down but very hardly with a great many, I muſt take the more care to guard it againſt the objections which will be made to it. Thoſe from natural diſability, or ſickneſs; from evident and apparent danger of the mother, or from the interpoſition of the father's authority, or from plain neceſſity; or if there be any other that have an equal reaſon with theſe, I have prevented already, by allowing them to be juſt and reaſonable exceptions from the general rule, when they are real, and not made pretences to ſhake off our duty.

But there are, beſides theſe, two objections which indeed are real, but yet ſeem to have too great a weight with thoſe who would fain decline this duty; and are by no means ſufficient to excuſe mothers, no not thoſe of the higheſt rank and quality, from the natural obligation

of it. And they are these; the manifest trouble, and the manifold restraints which the careful discharge of this duty does unavoidably bring upon those who submit themselves to it.

1. For the trouble of it; I have only this to say, and I think no more need to be said about it, that no body is discharged from any duty by reason of the trouble which necessarily attends it, and is inseparable from it; since God, who made it a duty, foresaw the trouble of it when he made it so.

2. As to the manifold restraints which it lays upon mothers; this will best be answered by considering of what nature these restraints are. And they are chiefly in these and the like instances. This duty restrains mothers from spending their mornings and their money in curious and costly dressing; from mispending the rest of the day in formal, and for the most part impertinent visits; and in seeing and hearing plays, many of which are neither fit to be seen nor heard by modest persons, and those who pretend to religion and virtue, as I hope all Christians do, especially persons of higher rank and quality; and it restrains them likewise from trifling away a great part of the night in gaming, and in revelling till past midnight, I am loth to say how much.

These are those terrible restraints which this natural duty, of mothers nursing their children, lays upon them. Now, I cannot but think all these to be very happy restraints: happy surely for the child, and in many respects happy for the father, and for the whole family, which by this means will be kept in much better order; but happiest of all for the mother, who does herein not only discharge a great and necessary duty, but is hereby also hindered from running into many great faults; which, before they will be forgiven, must cost her a deep contrition, and a very bitter repentance.

Perhaps I may have gone further in this unusual argument, than will please the present age. But I hope posterity will be so wise, as to consider it, and lay it to heart: for I am greatly afraid, that the world will never be much better till this great fault be mended. I proceed to the next particular wherein the good education of children doth consist, namely,

II. In

II. In bringing them to be baptiſed, and admitted members of Chriſt's church, at the times appointed or accuſtomed in the national church of which the parents are members; I mean, to bring them to the church to be there publicly initiated, and ſolemnly admitted by baptiſm. And this the rules of the church of England do ſtrictly enjoin, unleſs the child be in danger of death; and in that caſe only it is allowed to adminiſter baptiſm privately, and in a ſummary way, without performing the whole office. But then, if the child live, it is ordered that it ſhall be brought to the church, where the remainder of the office is to be ſolemnly performed.

I know that of late years, ſince our unhappy confuſions, this ſacrament hath very frequently been adminiſtered in private: and miniſters have been in a manner, and to avoid the greater miſchief of ſeparation, neceſſitated to comply with the obſtinacy of the greater and more powerful of their pariſhioners; who, for their eaſe or humour, or for the convenience of a pompous chriſtening, will either have their children baptiſed at home by their miniſter; or, if he refuſe, will get ſome other miniſter to do it: which is very irregular.

Now, I would intreat ſuch perſons calmly to conſider how contrary to reaſon, and to the plain deſign of the inſtitution of this ſacrament, this perverſe cuſtom, and their obſtinate reſolution in it, is. For is there any civil ſociety or corporation into which perſons are admitted without ſome kind of ſolemnity? And is the privilege of being admitted members of the chriſtian church, and heirs of the great and glorious promiſes and bleſſings of the new covenant of the goſpel, leſs conſiderable, and fit to be conferred with leſs ſolemnity? I ſpeak to Chriſtians; and they who are ſo in good earneſt, will, without my uſing more words about it, conſider what I ſay in this particular.

III. Another and very neceſſary part of the good education of children is, by degrees, to inform, and carefully to inſtruct them in the whole compaſs of their duty to God, their neighbour, and themſelves; that ſo they may be taught how to behave themſelves in all the ſteps of their life, from their firſt capacity of reaſon till they arrive at the more perfect uſe and exerciſe of that

faculty; when, if at first they be well instructed, they will be better able to direct and govern themselves afterwards.

This duty God does expressly and very particularly charge upon his own peculiar people, the people of Israel. Speaking of the law, which he had given them, *Thou shalt* (says he, Deut. vi. 7.) *teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.* And this God long before promised, that Abraham, *the father of the faithful*, would do: Gen. xviii. 19. *I know Abraham*, (says he) *that he will command his children, and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord.*

This work ought to be begun very early, upon the first budding and appearance of reason and understanding in children. So the prophet directs, Is. xxviii. 9. 10. *Whom shall he teach knowledge? whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept*, &c.

To this end we must, by such degrees as they are capable, bring them acquainted with God and themselves. And, in the first place, we must inform them, that there is such a being as God, whom we ought to honour and reverence above all things: and then, that we are all his creatures, and the work of his hands; that *it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves*; that he continually preserves us, and gives us all the good things that we enjoy; and therefore we ought to ask every thing of him by prayer, because this is an acknowledgment of our dependence upon him; and to return thanks to him for all that we have and hope for, because this is a just and easy tribute, and all that we can render to him for his numberless favours and benefits.

And, after this, they are to be instructed more particularly in their duty to God and men; as I shall shew more fully afterwards. And because fear and hope are the two passions which do chiefly sway and govern human nature, and the main springs and principles of action, therefore children are to be carefully informed, that there is a life after death, wherein men shall receive from God

God a mighty and eternal reward, or a terrible and endless punishment, according as they have done or neglected their duty in this life: that God will love and reward those who do his will, and keep his commandments; but will execute a dreadful punishment upon the workers of iniquity, and the wilful transgressors of his laws.

And, according as they are capable, they are to be made sensible of the great degeneracy and corruption of human nature, derived to us by the fall and wilful transgression of our first parents; and of the way of our recovery out of this miserable state by Jesus Christ, whom God hath sent, in our nature, to purchase and accomplish the redemption and salvation of mankind, from the captivity of sin and Satan, and from the damnation of hell.

IV. The good education of children consists not only in informing their minds in the knowledge of God and their duty; but more especially in endeavouring, with the greatest care and prudence, to form their lives and manners to religion and virtue. And this must be done by training them up to the exercise of the following graces and virtues.

1. To obedience and modesty, to diligence and sincerity, and to tenderness and pity, as the general dispositions to religion and virtue.

2. To the good government of their passions, and of their tongue; and particularly to speak truth, and to hate lying, as a base and vile quality; these being, as it were, the foundations of religion and virtue.

3. To piety and devotion towards God, to sobriety and chastity with regard to themselves, and to justice and charity towards all men, as the principal and essential parts of religion and virtue.

1. As the general dispositions to religion and virtue, we must train them up,

1*st*, To obedience. Parents must take great care to maintain their authority over their children; otherwise they will neither regard their commands, nor hearken to and follow their instructions. If they once get head, and grow stubborn and disobedient, there is very little hope left of doing any great good upon them.

2*dly*, To

2*dly*, To modesty; which is a fear of shame and disgrace. This disposition, which is proper to children, is a marvellous advantage to all good purposes. "They "are modest, (says Aristotle) who are afraid to offend; "and they are afraid to offend, who are most apt to do "it:" as children are; because they are much under the power of their passions, without a proportionable strength of reason to govern them and keep them under.

Now, modesty is not properly a virtue; but it is a very good sign of a tractable and towardly disposition, and a great preservative and security against sin and vice. And those children who are much under the restraint of modesty, we look upon as most hopeful and likely to prove good; whereas immodesty is a vitious temper, broke loose and got free from all restraint. So that there is nothing left to keep an impudent person from sin when fear of shame is gone; for sin will soon take possession of that person whom shame hath left. He that is once become shameless, hath prostituted himself. Therefore preserve this disposition in children as much as is possible, as one of the best means to preserve their innocency, and to bring them to goodness.

3*dly*, To diligence; *sine qua vir magnus nunquam extitit*: "Without which (says one) there never was any "great and excellent person." When the Roman historians describe an extraordinary man, this always enters into his character, as an essential part of it, that he was *incredibili industriâ, diligentiâ singulari*; "of incredible "industry, of singular diligence;" or something to that purpose. And indeed a person can neither be excellently good nor extremely bad, without this quality. The devil himself could not be so bad and mischievous as he is, if he were not so stirring and restless a spirit, and did not compass the earth, and *go to and fro, seeking whom he might devour*.

This is part of the character of Sylla, and Marius, and Catiline, those great disturbers of the Roman state; as well as of Cæsar and Pompey, who were much greater and better men, but yet gave trouble enough to their country, and at last dissolved the Roman commonwealth, by their ambition and contention for superiority; this, I say, enters into all their characters, that they were of a vigo-

a vigorous and indefatigable ſpirit. So that diligence in itſelf is neither a virtue nor a vice; but may be applied either way, to good or bad purpoſes: and yet where all other requiſites do concur, it is a very proper inſtrument and diſpoſition for virtue.

Therefore train up children to diligence, if ever you deſire they ſhould excel in any kind. *The hand of the diligent* (ſaith Solomon, Prov. x. 4.) *maketh rich*; rich in eſtate, rich in knowledge. *Seeſt thou a man diligent in his buſineſs?* (as the ſame wiſe man obſerves, Prov. xxii. 29.) *he ſhall ſtand before princes, he ſhall not ſtand before mean* (or obſcure) *men.* And again, *The hand of the diligent ſhall bear rule; but the ſlothful ſhall be under tribute*, Prov. xii. 24. Diligence puts almoſt every thing into our power, and will in time make children capable of the beſt and greateſt things.

Whereas idleneſs is the bane and ruin of children: it is the unbending of their ſpirits, the ruſt of their faculties, and as it were the laying of their minds fallow; not as husbandmen do their lands, that they may get new heart and ſtrength, but to impair and loſe that which they have. Children that are bred up in lazineſs, are almoſt neceſſarily bad; becauſe they cannot take the pains to be good: and they cannot take pains, becauſe they have never been inured and accuſtomed to it; which makes their ſpirits reſtive, and when you have occaſion to quicken them, and ſpur them up to buſineſs, they will ſtand ſtock ſtill.

Therefore never let your children be without a calling, or without ſome uſeful, or at leaſt innocent employment, that will take them up; that they not be put upon a kind of neceſſity of being vitious, for want of ſomething better to do. The devil tempts the active and vigorous into his ſervice, knowing what fit and proper inſtruments they are to do his drudgery: but the ſlothful and idle, no body having hired them, and ſet them on work, lie in his way, and he ſtumbles upon them as *he goes about*; and they do as it were offer themſelves to his ſervice; and having nothing to do, they even tempt the devil himſelf to tempt them, and to take them in his way.

4thly,

4thly, To ſincerity: which is not ſo properly a ſingle virtue, as the life and ſoul of all other graces and virtues; and without which, what ſhew of goodneſs ſoever a man may make, he is unſound and rotten at the heart. Cheriſh therefore this diſpoſition in children, as that which, when they come to be men, will be the great ſecurity and ornament of their lives, and will render them acceptable both to God and men.

5thly, To tenderneſs and pity: which when they come to engage in buſineſs, and to have dealings in the world, will be a good bar againſt injuſtice and oppreſſion; and will be continually prompting us to charity, and will fetch powerful arguments for it from our own bowels.

To preſerve this goodneſs and tenderneſs of nature, this ſo very humane and uſeful affection, keep children, as much as is poſſible, out of the way of bloody ſights, and ſpectacles of cruelty; and diſcountenance in them all cruel and barbarous uſage of creatures under their power: do not allow them to torture and kill them for their ſport and pleaſure; becauſe this will inſenſibly and by degrees harden their hearts, and make them leſs apt to compaſſionate the wants of the poor, and the ſufferings and afflictions of the miſerable.

2. As the main foundations of religion and virtue, children muſt be carefully trained up to the government of their paſſions, and of their tongues; and particularly to ſpeak truth, and to hate lying as a baſe and vile quality.

1ſt, To the good government of their paſſions. It is the diſorder of theſe, more eſpecially of deſire, and fear, and anger, which betrays us to many evils. Anger prompts men to contention and murder; inordinate deſire, to covetouſneſs, and fraud, and oppreſſion; and fear many times awes men into ſin, and deters them from their duty.

Now, if theſe paſſions be cheriſhed, or even but let alone in children, they will in a ſhort time grow headſtrong and unruly; and when they come to be men, will corrupt the judgment, and turn good nature into humour, and the underſtanding into prejudice and wilfulneſs; but if they be carefully obſerved and prudently reſtrained, they may by degrees be managed, and brought under government; and the inordinacy of them being pruned

pruned away, they may prove excellent instruments of virtue.

Therefore be careful to discountenance in children any thing that looks like rage and furious anger, and to shew them the unreasonableness and deformity of it. Check their longing desires after things pleasant, and use them to frequent disappointments in that kind; that when you think fit to gratify them, they may take it for a favour, and not challenge every thing they have a mind to as their due; and by degrees may learn to submit to the more prudent choice of their parents, as being much better able to judge what is good and fit for them.

And when you see them at any time apt out of fear to neglect their duty, or to fall into any sin, or to be tempted, by telling a lie, to commit one fault to hide and excuse another; which children are very apt to do: the best remedy of this evil will be, to plant a greater fear against a less, and to tell them what and whom they should chiefly fear; *not him who can hurt and kill the body; but him who, after he hath killed, can destroy both body and soul in hell.*

The neglect of children in this matter, I mean in not teaching them to govern their passions, is the true cause why many that have proved sincere Christians when they came to be men, have yet been very imperfect in their conversation, and their lives have been full of inequalities and breaches; which have not only been matter of great trouble and disquiet to themselves, but of great scandal to religion; when their light, which should shine before men, is often darkened and obscured by these frequent and visible infirmities.

2dly, To the government of their tongues. To this end teach children silence, especially in the presence of their betters; and as soon as they are capable of such a lesson, let them be taught not to speak, but upon consideration, both of what they say, and before whom. And above all, inculcate upon them that most necessary duty and virtue of speaking truth, as one of the best and strongest bands of human society and commerce: and possess them with the baseness and vileness of telling a lie; for if it be so great a provocation to give a man the

lie,

lie, then surely to be guilty of that fault, must be a mighty reproach.

They who write of Japan tell us, that those people though mere Heathens, take such an effectual course in the education of their children, as to render a lie and breach of faith above all things odious to them; insomuch that it is a very rare thing for any person among them to be taken in a lie, or found guilty of breach of faith. And cannot the rules of Christianity be rendered as effectual to restrain men from these faults which are scandalous even to nature, and much more so to the Christian religion?

To the government of the tongue does likeways belong the restraining of children from lewd and obscene words, from vain and profane talk; and especially from horrid oaths and imprecations; from all which they are easily kept at first; but if they are once accustomed to them, it will be found no such easy matter for them to get quit of these evil habits. It will require great attention and watchfulness over themselves, to keep oaths out of their common discourse; but if they be heated and in passion, they throw out oaths and curses as naturally as men that are highly provoked fling stones, or any thing that comes next to hand, at one another. So dangerous a thing is it to let any thing that is bad in children to grow up into a habit.

3. As the principal and essential parts of religion and virtue, let children be carefully bred up,

1st, To sobriety and temperance in regard to themselves; under which I comprehend likeways purity and chastity. The government of the sensual appetite, as to all kind of bodily pleasures, is not only a great part of religion, but an excellent instrument of it, and a necessary foundation of piety and justice. For he that cannot govern himself, is not like to discharge his duty either to God or men. And therefore St. Paul puts sobriety first, as a primary and principal virtue in which men are instructed by the Christian religion, and which must be laid as the foundation both of piety towards God, and of righteousness to men: *The grace of God* (for so he calls the gospel) *that bringeth salvation to all men, hath appeared; teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts,*

lufts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world. It firſt teacheth us to *live ſoberly*; and unleſs we train up children to this virtue, we muſt never expect that they will either *live righteouſly* or *godly in this preſent world.*

Eſpecially, children muſt be bred up to great ſobriety and temperance in their diet; which will retrench the fuel of other inordinate appetites. It is a good ſaying I have met with ſomewhere, *Magna pars virtutis eſt bene moratus venter:* "A well-mannered and well governed 'appetite, in matter of meats and drinks, is a great part 'of virtue." I do not mean, that children ſhould be brought up according to the rules of a Leſſian diet, which ſets an equal ſtint to all ſtomachs; and is as ſenſeleſs a thing, as a law would be which ſhould injoin that ſhoes for all mankind ſhould be made upon one and the ſame laſt.

2dly, To a ſerious and unaffected piety and devotion towards God, ſtill and quiet, real and ſubſtantial, without much ſhew and noiſe; and as free as may be from all tricks of ſuperſtition, or freaks of enthuſiaſm; which, if parents and teachers be not very prudent, will almoſt unavoidably inſinuate themſelves into the religion of children; and, when they are grown up, will make them appear, to wiſe and ſober perſons, phantaſtical and conceited; and render them very apt to impoſe their own fooliſh ſuperſtitions and wild conceits upon others, who underſtand religion much better than themſelves.

Let them be taught to honour and love God above all things; to ſerve him in private, and to attend conſtantly upon his public worſhip, and to keep their minds intent upon the ſeveral parts of it, without wandering and diſtraction: to pray to God as the fountain of all grace, and the *giver of every good and perfect gift*; and to acknowledge him, and to render thanks to him, as our moſt gracious and conſtant benefactor, and the great patron and preſerver of our lives: to be careful to do what he commands, and to avoid what he hath forbidden: to be always under a lively ſenſe and apprehenſion of his pure and all-ſeeing eye, which beholds us in ſecret: and to do every thing in obedience to the authority of that great lawgiver, *who is able to ſave, and to deſtroy*;

and with an awful regard to the ſtrict and impartial judg ment of the great day.

3*dly*, To juſtice and honeſty . to defraud and oppre no man ; to be as good as their word, and to perfor all their promiſes and contracts ; and endeavour to im print upon their minds the equity of that great rul which is ſo natural, and ſo eaſy, that even children ar capable of it ; I mean, that rule which our bleſſed Savi our tells us *is the law and the prophets*, namely, that w ſhould do to others as we would have others do to us we were in their caſe and circumſtances, and they in our

You that are parents, and have to do in the worl ought to be juſt and equal in all your dealings ; in th firſt place, for the ſake of your own ſouls ; and next, fo the ſake of your children ; not only that you may enta no curſe upon the eſtate you leave them, but likeway that you may teach them no injuſtice by the example yo ſet before them : which in this particular they will be a apt to imitate as in any one thing ; becauſe of the pre ſent worldly advantage which it ſeems to bring, and be cauſe juſtice is in truth a manly virtue, and leaſt under ſtood by children ; and therefore injuſtice is a vice whic they will ſooneſt practiſe, and with the leaſt reluctancy becauſe they have the leaſt knowledge of it in many par ticular caſes : and becauſe they have ſo little ſenſe of thi great virtue, they ſhould not be allowed to cheat, no no in play and ſport, even when they play for little or no thing ; for if they practiſe it in that caſe, and be unjuſ in a little, they will be much more tempted to be ſ when they can gain a great deal by it.

I remember, that Xenophon, in his *inſtitution of Cyrus* which he deſigned for the idea of a well educated prince tells us this little, but very inſtructive ſtory concerning young Cyrus : That his governor, the better to make him to underſtand the nature of juſtice, puts this caſe to him. You ſee there (ſays he to Cyrus) two boys play ing, of different ſtature ; the leſſer of them hath a very long coat, and the bigger a very ſhort one ; now, (ſays he) if you were a judge, how would you diſpoſe of theſe two garments ? Cyrus immediately, and with very good reaſon as he thought, paſſeth this ſudden ſentence, That the taller boy ſhould have the longer garment, and he

that

hat was of lower ſtature the ſhorter, becauſe this certainly was fitteſt for them both. Upon which his governor harply rebukes him to this purpoſe, telling him, that if he were to make two coats for them, he ſaid well; but he did not put this caſe to him as a taylor, but as a judge, and as ſuch he had given a very wrong ſentence: for a judge (ſays he) ought not to conſider what is moſt fit, but what is juſt; not who could make the beſt uſe of a thing, but who hath the moſt right to it.

This I bring, partly to ſhew in what familiar ways the principles of virtue may be inſtilled into children; but chiefly to prove, that juſtice is a manly virtue, and that there is nothing wherein children may be more eaſily miſled, than in matter of right and wrong; therefore children ſhould be taught the general principles and rules of juſtice and righteouſneſs; becauſe, if we would teach them to do juſtice, we muſt teach them to know what juſtice is. For many are unjuſt merely out of ignorance, and for want of knowing better, and cannot help it.

4*thly*, To charity; I mean, chiefly to the poor and deſtitute; becauſe this, as it is an eſſential, ſo is it a moſt ſubſtantial part of religion. Now, to encourage this diſpoſition in children, we muſt not only give them the example of it, but muſt frequently inculcate upon them ſuch paſſages of ſcripture as theſe: that *pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, To viſit the fatherleſs and widows in their affliction:* that *as we ſow* in this kind, *ſo ſhall we reap:* that *he ſhall have judgment without mercy, who hath ſhewed no mercy*; that at the judgment of the great day we ſhall in a very particular manner be called to an account for the practice or omiſſion of this duty; and ſhall then be abſolved or condemned, according as we have exerciſed or neglected this great virtue of the Chriſtian religion.

SERMON LII.

Of the education of children.

PROV. xxii. 6.

Train up a child in the way he ſhould go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

The ſecond ſermon on this text.

V. THE good education of children conſiſts in giving them good example. This courſe David took in his family, as appears by that ſolemn reſolution of his, Pſal. ci. 2. *I will behave myſelf wiſely in a perfect way; I will walk within my houſe with a perfect heart.* Let parents and maſters of families give good example to their children and ſervants, in a conſtant ſerving of God in their families; which will nouriſh religion in thoſe that are under their care; and let them alſo be exemplary in a ſober and holy converſation before thoſe that belong to them.

And let not your children, as far as is poſſible, have any bad examples to converſe with, either among your ſervants, or their own companions; leſt, *by walking with them, they learn their way, and get a blot to their ſouls.* There is a contagion in example, and nothing doth more ſlily inſinuate itſelf and gain upon us, than a living and familiar pattern; therefore, as much as in you lies, let children always have good examples before them.

Eſpecially, let parents themſelves be exemplary to them in the beſt things, becauſe their example is of all other the moſt powerful, and carries greateſt authority with it. And without this, inſtruction will ſignify very little, and the great force and efficacy of it will be loſt. We ſhall find it very hard to perſuade our children to do that which they ſee we do not practiſe ourſelves: for even children have ſo much ſenſe and ſagacity, as to underſtand, that actions are more real than words, and a more certain indication of what a man doth truly and inwardly

ly believe. Example is the moſt lively way of teaching: and becauſe children are much given to imitation, it is likewiſe a very delightful way of inſtruction, and that of which children are moſt capable; both becauſe it is beſt underſtood, and is apt to make the deepeſt impreſſion upon them.

So that parents, above all others, have one argument to be religious and good themſelves, for the ſake of their children. If you deſire to have them good, the beſt way to make them ſo, is, to give them the example of it in being good yourſelves. For this reaſon parents ſhould take great care to do nothing but what is worthy of imitation. Your children will follow you in what you do; therefore do not go before them in any thing that is evil. The evil example of parents is both a temptation and encouragement to children to ſin, becauſe it is a kind of authority for what they do, and looks like a juſtification of their wickedneſs.

With what reaſon canſt thou expect that thy children ſhould follow thy good inſtructions, when thou thyſelf giveſt them an ill example? Thou doſt but as it were becken to them with thy head, and ſhew them the way to heaven by thy good counſel; but thou takeſt them by the hand, and leadeſt them in the way to hell by thy contrary example. Whenever you ſwear, or tell a lie, or are paſſionate and furious, or come drunk into your family, you weaken the authority of your commands, and loſe all reverence and obedience to them, by contradicting your own precepts.

The precepts of a good man are apt to raiſe and inflame others to the imitation of them; but when they come from one who is faulty and vitious in that kind himſelf, they are languid and faint, and give us no heart and encouragement to the exerciſe of thoſe virtues which we plainly ſee they do not practiſe themſelves. It is the Apoſtle's argument, *Thou therefore that teacheſt another, teacheſt thou not thyſelf?* Thou that teacheſt thy children to ſpeak a truth, doſt thou tell a lie? Thou that ſayeſt they muſt not ſwear, doſt thou profane the name of God by cuſtomary oaths and curſes? Thou art unfit to be *a guide of the blind, a light to them that are in darkneſs, an inſtructer of the fooliſh*, and *a teacher of babes*; be-

cauſe thou thyſelf *haſt* only *a form of knowledge and of truth in the law*, but art deſtitute of the life and practice of it. In a word, if you be not careful to give good example to your children, you defeat your own counſels, and undermine the beſt inſtructions you can give them; and they will all be ſpilt like water upon the barren ſands; they will have no effect, they will bring forth no fruit.

VI. Good education conſiſts in wiſe and early reſtraints from that which is evil, by ſeaſonable reproof and correction: and this alſo is one way of inſtruction. So Solomon tells us, Prov. xxix. 15. *The rod and reproof give wiſdom.* And though both theſe do ſuppoſe a fault that is paſt, yet the great end of them is, to prevent the like for the future, and to be an admonition to them for the time to come. And therefore, whatever will probably be effectual for future caution and amendment, ought to be ſufficient in this kind; becauſe the end is always to give meaſure to the means: and where a mild and gentle rebuke will do the buſineſs, reproof may ſtop there without proceeding farther: or when that will not do, if a ſharp word and a ſevere admonition will be effectual, the rod may be ſpared.

Provided always, that your lenity give no encouragement to ſin, and be ſo managed, that children may perceive that you are in good earneſt, and reſolved, that if they will not reform, they ſhall certainly be puniſhed: and provided likewiſe, that your lenity bear a due proportion to the nature and quality of the fault. We muſt not uſe mildneſs in the caſe of a wilful and heinous ſin, eſpecially if it be exemplary, and of public influence. To rebuke gently upon ſuch an occaſion, is rather to countenance the fault, and ſeems to argue that we are not ſenſible enough of the enormity of it, and that we have not a due diſlike and deteſtation for it: ſuch cold reproofs as thoſe which old Eli gave his ſons, 1 Sam. ii. 23. 24. *Why do ye ſuch things? for I hear of your evil dealings, by all this people*; (that is, their carriage was ſuch as gave public ſcandal). *Nay, my ſons; for it is no good report that I hear; ye make the Lord's people to tranſgreſs.*

Such

Such a cold reproof as this, where the crime was so great and notorious, was a kind of allowance of it, and a partaking with them in their sin: and so God interprets it; and therefore calls it, *a kicking at his sacrifice, and a despising of his offering*, chap. ii. 29. And he threatens Eli with most terrible judgments upon this very account; *because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.*

So that our severity must be proportioned to the crime. Where the fault is great, there greater severity must be used; so much at least, as may be an effectual restraint for the future. Here was Eli's miscarriage; that in the case of so great a fault as his sons were guilty of, his proceeding was neither proportioned to the crime, nor to the end of reproof and correction, which is amendment for the future: but he used such a mildness in his reproof of them, as was more apt to encourage, than restrain them in their vile courses; for so the text says, that *his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.*

There are indeed some dispositions so very tender and tractable, that a gentle reproof will suffice. But most children are of that temper, that correction must be sometimes used; and a fond indulgence in this case, is many times their utter ruin and undoing; and, in truth, not love, but hatred. So the wise man tells us, Prov. xiii. 24. *He that spareth his rod, hateth his son; but he that loveth him, chasteneth him betimes.* Chap. xix. 18. *Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.* And again, chap. xxii. 15. *Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.* Chap. xxiii. 13. 14. *With-hold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.* Again, chap. xxix. 15. *The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself, bringeth his mother to shame.* He mentions the mother emphatically; because she many times is most faulty in this fond indulgence; and therefore the shame and grief of it doth justly fall upon her.

So that correction is of great use, and often necessary; and parents that forbear it, are not only cruel to their

their children, but to themſelves: for God many times puniſheth thoſe parents very ſeverely, who have neglected this neceſſary piece of diſcipline. There is hardly to be found in the whole Bible a more terrible temporal threatning, than that concerning Eli and his houſe, for his fond indulgence to his ſons, who, when they came to be men, proved ſuch horrible ſcandals not only to their father, but to the prieſt's office; and to that degree, as to *make the ſacrifices of the Lord to be abhorred by all the people.* I will recite the threatning at large, for an admonition to parents, that they be not guilty in this kind: 1 Sam. iii. 11. 12. 13. 14. *The Lord ſaid to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Iſrael, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it, ſhall tingle. In that day, I will perform againſt Eli, all things which I have ſpoken concerning his houſe: when I begin, I will alſo make an end. For I have told him, that I will judge his houſe for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth: becauſe his ſons made themſelves vile, and he reſtrained them not. And therefore I have ſworn unto the houſe of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's houſe ſhall not be purged with ſacrifice nor offering for ever.* I know very well, that this enormous wickedneſs of Eli's ſons was committed by them after they were grown to be men. But this inſtance is nevertheleſs to my preſent purpoſe; there being hardly any doubt to be made, but that it was the natural effect of a remiſs and too indulgent education.

Yea, very often God doth correct and remarkably puniſh fond parents by thoſe very children who have wanted due reproof and correction. Of which the ſcripture gives us a remarkable inſtance in Adonijah; upon the mention of whoſe rebellion againſt David his father, the text takes particular notice of his father's extreme fondneſs of him, as both the procuring and meritorious cauſe of it: *For his father had not diſpleaſed him at any time in ſaying, Why haſt thou done ſo?* And, on the contrary, the wiſe ſon of Sirach tells us, that *he that chaſtiſeth his ſon, ſhall have joy of him.*

VII. The next thing I ſhall mention, as a part of good education, is, the bringing of children to be publickly catechiſed by the miniſter, to prepare them for ſolemn confirmation.

It

It was with a particular reſpect to this work of public catechizing, and by way of introduction to it, that I at firſt propoſed to treat thus largely of the good education of children; hoping it might be of good uſe to handle this ſubject more fully than it hath uſually been done, at leaſt to my knowledge, from the pulpit.

And therefore I ſhall ſay ſomething, and that very briefly, concerning the nature, and concerning the neceſſity and great uſefulneſs of catechizing children.

1. For the nature of it; it is a particular way of teaching by queſtion and anſwer, accommodated and fitted for the inſtruction of children in the principles of religion. I do not indeed find, that this particular method is any where injoined in ſcripture: but inſtruction in general is; and I doubt not, but that, upon this general warrant, parents and miniſters may uſe that way of inſtruction of children, which is moſt fit and proper to inſtil into them the principles of religion. It is true, that the word κατηχεῖν, from whence our word catechiſm doth come, is uſed in ſcripture to ſignify teaching in general: but it hath ſince by eccleſiaſtical writers been appropriated to that particular way of inſtruction, which hath been long in uſe in the chriſtian church, and is commonly called *catechizing*.

2. As to the neceſſity and great uſefulneſs of it; catechizing hath a particular advantage as to children; becauſe they are ſubject to forgetfulneſs, and want of attention. Now, catechizing is a good remedy againſt both theſe; becauſe, by queſtions put to them, children are forced to take notice of what is taught, and muſt give ſome anſwer to the queſtion that is aſked: and a catechiſm being ſhort, and containing in a little compaſs the moſt neceſſary principles of religion, it is the more eaſily remembered.

The great uſefulneſs, and indeed the neceſſity of it, plainly appears by experience. For it very ſeldom happens, that children which have not been catechized, have any clear and competent knowledge of the principles of religion; and, for want of this, are incapable of receiving any great benefit by ſermons, which ſuppoſe perſons to be in ſome meaſure inſtructed beforehand in the main principles of religion.

Beſides

Beſides, that if they have no principles of religion fixed in them, they become an eaſy prey to ſeducers. And we have had ſad experience of this in our age; and, among many other diſmal effects of our late civil confuſions, this is none of the leaſt, that public catechizing was almoſt wholly diſuſed, and private too, in moſt families: for, had catechizing of children been continued, it is very probable, that this age would have been infeſted with fewer errors, and with fewer ſchiſms; and that there would not have been ſo much apoſtaſy from the fundamentals of religion. For it is, I think, a true obſervation, that catechizing, and the hiſtory of the martyrs, have been the two great pillars of the proteſtant religion.

There being then ſo great a neceſſity and uſefulneſs of this way of inſtruction, I would earneſtly recommend the practice of it to parents and maſters of families, with reſpect to their children and ſervants. For I do not think, that this work ſhould lie wholly upon miniſters. You muſt do your part at home, who, by your conſtant reſidence in your families, have better and more eaſy opportunities of inculcating the principles of religion upon your children and ſervants. There you muſt prepare them for public catechizing, that the work of the miniſter may not be too heavy upon him.

As to the part which concerns miniſters, I intend, by God's aſſiſtance, ſo ſoon as the buſineſs can be put into a good method, to begin this exerciſe. And I do earneſtly intreat all that have young children, and ſervants, to bring ſuch of them as are fit, to be publickly catechized and inſtructed in the principles of religion: and I ſhall, as often as ſhall be thought expedient, ſpend ſome time in this work, between afternoon prayers and ſermon.

The catechiſm to be uſed ſhall be that appointed in our liturgy; which is ſhort, and contains in it the chief principles of the chriſtian religion. And I ſhall make a ſhort and plain explication of the heads of it, ſuitable to the capacity of children. And becauſe this may not probably be of ſo great advantage to thoſe who are of riper years and underſtandings; yet, becauſe children are to be inſtructed as well as men, I muſt intreat thoſe who are

are like to carry away the leaſt profit, to bring with them the more patience; eſpecially ſince I ſhall, for their ſakes, in the conſtant courſe of my afternoon ſermons, more largely and fully explain the chief principles of the chriſtian belief: a work which you know I have ſome time ago entered upon.

VIII. The laſt thing I ſhall mention, and with which the ſtate of childhood ends, is, the bringing of children to the Biſhop, to be ſolemnly confirmed, by their taking upon themſelves the vow which by their ſureties they entered into at their baptiſm.

This is acknowledged by almoſt all ſects and parties of Chriſtians to be of primitive antiquity, and of very great uſe, when it is performed with that due preparation of perſons for it, by the miniſters to whoſe charge they belong, and with that ſerioufneſs and ſolemnity which the nature of the thing doth require.

And to that end it were very deſirable that confirmations ſhould be more frequent, and in ſmaller numbers at a time, that ſo the biſhop may apply himſelf more particularly to every perſon that is to be confirmed: that by this means the thing may make the deeper impreſſion, and lay the ſtronger obligation upon them.

One thing more I could wiſh, both to prevent confuſion, and for the eaſe alſo of the biſhop, that his work may not be endleſs, that miniſters would take care that none may preſent themſelves to the biſhop, or be preſented by the miniſters, to be confirmed a ſecond time; becauſe a great many are wont to offer themſelves every time there is a confirmation; which is both very diſorderly and unreaſonable, there being every whit as little reaſon for a ſecond confirmation, as there is for a ſecond baptiſm; and if any perſons need ſo often to be confirmed, it is a ſign that confirmation hath very little effect upon them.

Secondly, I proceed to the ſecond general head; which was, to give ſome more particular directions for the management of this work, of the good education of children, in ſuch a way as may be moſt effectual to its end.

1. Endeavour, as well as you can, to diſcover the particular temper and diſpoſition of children, that you may ſuit and apply yourſelves to it, and, by ſtriking in with nature,

nature, may steer and govern them in the sweetest and easiest way. This is like knowledge of the nature of the ground to be planted, which husbandmen are wont very carefully to inquire into, that they may apply the seed to the soil, and plant in it that which is most proper for it.

Quid quæque ferat regio, quid quæque recuset.
Hic segetes, illic veniunt felicius uvæ:

"Every soil is not proper for all sorts of grain or fruit; "one ground is fit for corn, another for vines." And so is it in the tempers and dispositions of children: some are more capable of one excellency and virtue than another, and some more strongly inclined to one vice than another; which is a great secret of nature and providence, and it is very hard to give a just and satisfactory account of it.

It is good therefore to know the particular tempers of children, that we may accordingly apply our care to them, and manage them to the best advantage: that, where we discern in them any forward inclinations to good, we may cast in such seeds and principles, as, by their suitableness to their particular tempers, we judge most likely to take soonest and deepest root; and, when these are grown up, and have taken possession of the soil, they will prepare it for the seeds of other virtues.

And so likewise, when we discover in their nature a more particular disposition, and leaning towards any thing which is bad, we must, with great diligence and care, apply such instructions, and plant such principles in them, as may be most effectual to alter this evil disposition of their minds, that, whilst nature is tender and flexible, we may gently bend it the other way; and it is almost incredible what strange things, by prudence and patience, may be done towards the rectifying of a very perverse and crooked disposition.

So that it is of very great use to observe and discover the particular tempers of children, that, in our instruction and management of them, we may apply ourselves to their nature, and hit their peculiar disposition. By this means we may lead and draw them to their duty in human ways, and such as are much more agreeable to their temper, than constraint and necessity, which are harsh

harſh and churliſh, and againſt the grain. Whatever is done with delight, goes on chearfully; but when nature is compelled and forced, things proceed heavily: therefore, when we are forming and faſhioning children to religion and virtue, we ſhould make all the advantage we can of their particular tempers. This will be a good direction and help to us to conduct nature in the way it will moſt eaſily go. Every temper gives ſome particular advantage and handle whereby we may take hold of them, and ſteer them more eaſily: but if we take a contrary courſe, we muſt expect to meet with great difficulty and reluctancy.

Such ways of education as are prudently fitted to the particular diſpoſitions of children, are like wind and tide together, which will make the work go on amain: but thoſe ways and methods which are applied croſs to nature, are like wind againſt tide, which makes a great ſtir and conflict, but a very ſlow progreſs. Not that I do, or can expect that all parents ſhould be philoſophers, but that they ſhould uſe the beſt wiſdom they have in a matter of ſo great concernment.

2. In your inſtruction of children, endeavour to plant in them thoſe principles of religion and virtue which are moſt ſubſtantial, and are like to have the beſt influence upon the future government of their lives, and to be of continual and laſting uſe to them. Look to the ſeed you ſow, that it be ſound and good, and for the benefit and uſe of mankind. This is to be regarded, as well as the ground into which the ſeed is caſt.

Labour to beget in children a right apprehenſion of thoſe things which are moſt fundamental and neceſſary to the knowledge of God and our duty; and to make them ſenſible of the great evil and danger of ſin; and to work in them a firm belief of the next life, and of the eternal rewards and recompences of it. And if theſe principles once take root, they will ſpread far and wide, and have a vaſt influence upon all their actions; and, unleſs ſome powerful luſt, or temptation to vice, hurry them away, they will probably accompany them, and ſtick by them as long as they live.

Many parents, according to their knowledge and apprehenſions of religion, in which they themſelves have

been educated, and too often according to their zeal without knowledge, do take great care to plant little and ill grounded opinions in the minds of their children and to fashion them to a party, by infusing into them the particular notions and phrases of a sect; which when they come to be examined, have no substance, nor perhaps sense in them: and, by this means, instead of bringing them up in the true and solid principles of Christianity, they take a great deal of pains to instruct them in some doubtful doctrines of no great moment in religion, and perhaps false at the bottom; whereby, instead of teaching them to hate sin, they fix them in schism, and teach them to hate and damn all those who differ from them, and are opposite to them; who yet are perhaps much more in the right, and far better Christians than themselves.

And indeed nothing is more common, and more to be pitied, than to see with what a confident contempt and scornful pity some ill-instructed and ignorant people will lament the blindness and ignorance of those who have a thousand times more true knowledge and skill than themselves, not only in all other things, but even in the practice, as well as knowledge of the christian religion; believing those who do not relish their affected phrases and uncouth forms of speech, to be ignorant of the mystery of the gospel, and utter strangers to the life and power of godliness.

But now, what is the effect of this mistaken way of education? The harvest is just answerable to the husbandry.

Infelix lolium & steriles dominantur avenæ:

As they have sown, so they must expect to reap; and, instead of good grain, to "have cockle and tares." *They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind*; as the expression is in the Prophet: instead of true religion, and of a sober and peaceable conversation, there will come up new and wild opinions, a factious and uncharitable spirit, a furious and boisterous zeal, which will neither suffer themselves to be quiet, nor any body that is about them.

But if you desire to reap the effects of true piety and religion, you must take care to plant in children the main

nain and ſubſtantial principles of Chriſtianity, which nay give them a general bias to holineſs and goodneſs; ınd not to little particular opinions, which being once ixed in them by the ſtrong prejudice of education, will ıardly ever be rooted out.

3. Do all that in you lies to check and diſcourage in hem the firſt beginnings of ſin and vice. So ſoon as ever they appear, pluck them up by the roots. This is ike the weeding of corn; which is a neceſſary piece of good husbandry. Vices, like ill weeds, grow apace; ınd if they once take to the ſoil, it will be hard to exırpate and kill them: but if we watch them, and cut hem up as ſoon as they appear, this will diſcourage the root, and make it die.

Therefore take great heed that your children be not habituated and accuſtomed to any evil courſe. A vice hat is of any conſiderable growth and continuance, will ſoon grow obſtinate; and having once ſpread its roots, it will be a very difficult matter to clear the ground of it. A child may be ſo long neglected till he be overgrown with vice, to that degree, that it may be out of the power of parents ever to bring him to good fruit. If it once gain upon the depraved diſpoſition of children, it will be one of the hardeſt things in the world to give a ſtop to it. It is the Apoſtle's caution, to *take heed of being hardened by the deceitfulneſs of ſin*; which they who go on in an evil courſe, will moſt certainly be. We ſhould obſerve the firſt appearances of evil in children, and kill thoſe young ſerpents as ſoon as they ſtir, leſt they bite them to death.

4. Bring them, as ſoon as they are capable of it, to the public worſhip of God, where he hath promiſed his more eſpecial preſence and bleſſing. It is in Zion, the place of God's public worſhip, where *the Lord hath commanded the bleſſing, even life for evermore.* There are the means which God hath appointed for the begetting and increaſing of grace in us. This is the pool where the angel uſeth to come, and to *move the waters.* Bring your children hither; where, if they diligently attend, they may meet with an opportunity of being healed.

And when they come from the church, call them fre-

quently to an account of what they have heard and learned there. This will make them both to attend more diligently to what they hear, and to lay it up in their memories with greater care; and will fix it there, so as to make a deeper and more lasting impression upon their minds.

5. Be careful more especially to put them upon the exercise and practice of religion and virtue, in such instances as their understanding and age are capable of: Teach them some short and proper forms of prayers to God, to be said by them devoutly upon their knees in private, at least every morning and evening. A great many children neglect this, not from any ill disposition of mind, but because no body takes care to teach them how to do it. And, if they were taught and put upon doing it, the habit and custom of any thing will, after a little while, make that easy and delightful enough, which they cannot afterwards be brought to without great difficulty and reluctancy.

Knowledge and practice do mutually promote and help forward one another: Knowledge prepares and disposeth for practice; and practice is the best way to perfect knowledge in any kind. Mere speculation is a very raw and rude thing, in comparison of that true and distinct knowledge which is gotten by practice and experience. The most exact skill in geography is nothing, compared with the knowledge of that man, who, besides the speculative part, hath travelled over and carefully viewed the countries he hath read of. The most knowing man in the art and rules of navigation is no body, in comparison of an experienced pilot and seaman: Because knowledge perfected by practice is as much different from mere speculation, as the skill of doing a thing is from being told how a thing is to be done. For men may easily mistake rules, but frequent practice and experience are seldom deceived. Give me a man that constantly does a thing well, and that shall satisfy me, that he knows how to do it. That saying of our blessed Saviour, *If any man will do my will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself*, is a clear determination of this matter, namely, that they understand the will of God best, who are most careful to do

do it. And so likewise, the best way to know what God is, is, to transcribe his perfections in our lives and actions; to be holy, and just, and good, and merciful, as he is.

Therefore, when the minds of children are once thoroughly possessed with the true principles of religion, we should bend all our endeavours to put them upon the practice of what they know. Let them rather be taught to do well than to talk well: rather to avoid what is evil, in all its shapes and appearances, and to practise their duty in the several instances of it, than to *speak with the tongues of men and angels. Unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, is understanding,* Job. xxviii. 28. *Hereby* (saith St. John, 1 epist. ii. 3. 4.) *we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

Xenophon tells us, that the Persians, instead of making their children learned, taught them to be virtuous; and, instead of filling their heads with fine speculations, taught them honesty, and sincerity, and resolution; and endeavoured to make them wise and valiant, just and temperate. Lycurgus also, in the institution of the Lacedæmonian commonwealth, took no care about learning, but only about the lives and manners of their children: though I should think, that the care of both is best; and that learning would very much help to form the manners of children, and to make them both wiser and better men. And therefore, with the leave of so great and wise a lawgiver, I cannot but think, that this was a defect in his institution; because learning, if it be under the conduct of true wisdom and goodness, is not only an ornament, but a great advantage to the better government of any kingdom or commonwealth.

6. There must be great care and diligence used in this whole business of education, and more particularly in the instruction of children. There must be *line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little*; as the Prophet expresseth it, Is. xxviii. 10. The principles of religion and virtue must be instilled and dropt into them by such degrees and in such a measure

as they are capable of receiving them; for children are narrow-mouthed veſſels, and a great deal cannot be poured into them at once.

And they muſt alſo be accuſtomed to the practice and exerciſe of religion and goodneſs by degrees, till holineſs and virtue have taken root, and they be well ſettled and confirmed in a good courſe. Now, this requires conſtant attendance, and even the patience of the husbandman, to wait for the fruit of our labours.

In ſome children the ſeeds that are ſown fall into a greater depth of earth; and therefore are of a ſlow diſcloſure, and it may be a conſiderable time before they appear above ground. It is long before they ſhoot and grow up to any height; and yet they may afterwards be very conſiderable: "Which (as an ingenious author "[Sir H. W.] obſerves) ſhould excite the care and pre-"vent the deſpair of parents; for if their children be "not ſuch ſpeedy ſpreaders and branchers as the vine, "they may perhaps prove

——*proles tardè creſcentis olivæ.*"

It is a work of great pains and difficulty, to rectify a perverſe diſpoſition. It is more eaſy to palliate the corruption of nature; but the cure of it requires time, and careful looking to. An evil temper and inclination may be covered and concealed, but it is a great work to conquer and ſubdue it. It muſt firſt be checked and ſtopped in its courſe, and then weakened, and the force of it be broken by degrees; and at laſt, if it be poſſible, deſtroyed and rooted out.

7. And laſtly, To all theſe means we muſt add our conſtant and earneſt prayers to God for our children, that his grace may take an early poſſeſſion of them; that he would give them virtuous inclinations, and towardly diſpoſitions for goodneſs; and that he would be pleaſed to accompany all our endeavours to that end with his powerful aſſiſtance and bleſſing; without which, all that we can do will prove ineffectual. Parents may *plant*, and miniſters may *water*, but it is *God that muſt give the increaſe*.

Be often then upon your knees for your children. Do not only teach them to pray for themſelves, but do you likeways,

likeways, with great fervour and earneſtneſs, *commend them to God, and to the power of his grace*; which alone is able to ſanctify them. Apply yourſelves to *the Father of lights*; *from whom comes every good and perfect gift*. Beg his holy ſpirit, and ask divine knowledge and wiſdom for them of him, *who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth no man*. Beſeech him to ſeaſon their tender years with his *fear*, which *is the beginning of wiſdom*. Pray for them as Abraham did for Iſhmael, *Oh that Iſhmael may live in thy ſight!*

Many parents, having found all their endeavours for a long time together ineffectual, have at length betook themſelves to prayer, earneſt and importunate prayer to God, as their laſt refuge. Monica, the mother of St. Auſtin, by the conſtancy and importunity of her prayers, obtained of God the converſion of her ſon, who proved afterwards ſo great and glorious an inſtrument of good to the church of God: according to what St. Ambroſe, biſhop of Milan, to encourage her to perſevere in her fervent prayers for her ſon, had ſaid to her, *Fieri non poteſt, ut filius tot lacrymarum pereat*: "It cannot be, (ſays "he) that a ſon of ſo many prayers and tears ſhould "miſcarry." God's grace is free; but it is not unlikely, but that God will at laſt give in this bleſſing to our earneſt prayers and faithful endeavours.

Therefore *pray* for them *without ceaſing: pray and faint not*. Great importunity in prayer ſeldom fails of a gracious anſwer. Our bleſſed Saviour ſpake two parables on purpoſe to encourage us herein; not becauſe God is moved, much leſs becauſe he is tired out with our importunity, but becauſe it is an argument of our firm belief and confidence in his great goodneſs. And *to them that believe, all things are poſſible*, ſays our bleſſed Lord. To whom, &c.

SER.

SERMON LIII.

Of the education of children.

PROV. xxii. 6.

Train up a child in the way he ſhould go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

The third ſermon on this text.

I Proceed to the next general head which I propoſed, namely,

Thirdly, To diſcover ſome of the more remarkable and common miſcarriages in the management of this work. I do not hereby mean groſs neglects, for want of care; but miſtakes and miſcarriages, for want of prudence and skill, even when there is no want of care and diligence in parents and inſtructers. And I ſhall, for method's ſake, reduce the more conſiderable and common miſcarriages to theſe three heads.

1. In matter of inſtruction.
2. In matter of example.
3. In matter of reproof and correction.

1. In matter of inſtruction. Parents do very often mainly miſcarry in not teaching their children the true difference between good and evil, and the degrees of them: As, when we teach them any thing is a ſin that really is not, or that any thing is not a ſin which in truth is ſo: or when we teach them to lay more ſtreſs and weight upon things than they will bear; making that which perhaps is only convenient, to be in the higheſt degree neceſſary; or that which it may be is only inconvenient, or may be an occaſion of ſcandal to ſome weak Chriſtians, to be a ſin in its own nature damnable.

Parents do likeways lay too great a weight upon things, when they are as diligent to inſtruct them in leſſer things, and as ſtrict in injoining them, and as ſevere in puniſhing the commiſſion or neglect of them, according as they eſteem them good or evil, as if they were *the weightier things*

things of the law, and matters of the greateſt moment in religion.

Thus I have known very careful and well-meaning parents that have with great ſeverity reſtrained their children in the wearing of their hair: nay, I can remember ſince the wearing of it below their ears was looked upon as a ſin of the firſt magnitude; and when miniſters generally, whatever their text was, did in every ſermon either find or make an occaſion with great ſeverity to reprove the great ſin of long hair; and if they ſaw any one in the congregation guilty in that kind, they would point him out particularly, and let fly at him with great zeal.

I have likeways known ſome parents that have ſtrictly forbidden their children the uſe of ſome ſorts of recreations and games under the notion of heinous ſins, upon a miſtake, that becauſe there was in them a mixture of fortune and skill, they were therefore unlawful: A reaſon which I think hath no weight and force in it; tho' I do not deny, but human laws may, for very prudent reaſons, either reſtrain or forbid the uſe of theſe games, becauſe of the boundleſs expence, both of money and time, which is many times occaſioned by them.

I have known others, nay perhaps the ſame perſons, that would not only allow, but even encourge their children to deſpiſe the very ſervice of God under ſome forms, which according to their ſeveral apprehenſions they eſteemed to be ſuperſtitious or factious. But this I have ever thought to be a thing of moſt dangerous conſequence, and have often obſerved it to end either in the neglect or contempt of all religion.

And how many parents teach their children doubtful opinions, and lay great ſtreſs upon them, as if they were ſaving or damning points; and hereby ſet ſuch an edge and keenneſs upon them for or againſt ſome indifferent modes and circumſtances of God's worſhip, as if the very being of a church, and the eſſence of religion, were concerned in them?

Theſe certainly are great miſtakes, and many times have very pernicious effects, thus to confound things which are of ſo wide and vaſt a difference, as good and evil, lawful and unlawful, indifferent and neceſſary. For when children come to be men, and to have a freer and larger

larger view of the world, and ſhall find, by the contrary practice of very wiſe and ſerious perſons, that they have quite different apprehenſions of theſe matters, and do not think that to be a ſin which their parents have ſo ſtrictly forbidden them under that notion, and many times puniſhed them more ſeverely for the doing of it than if they had told a lie; this may make them apt to queſtion whether any thing be a ſin: and the violence which they offer to their conſciences, and the ſtrain that they give them upon ſuch an occaſion, by complying with the general practice of others, contrary to the principles of their education, doth many times open a gap for great and real ſins.

Beſides, that children which are bred up in high prejudices for or againſt indifferent opinions or practices in religion, do uſually, when they are grown up, prove to be men of narrow and contracted ſpirits; peeviſh, and froward, and uncharitable; and many times great bigots and zealots, either in the way of ſuperſtition or faction, according to the principles which have been inſtilled into them to biaſs them either way: and very hardly do they ever quit themſelves ſo clearly of their prejudices, as to become wiſe, and peaceable, and ſubſtantial Chriſtians.

In ſhort, if we carefully obſerve it, we ſhall find, that when children have been thus indiſcreetly educated, their religion differs as much from that of ſober and judicious Chriſtians, as the civil behaviour and converſation of thoſe who have been unskilfully and conceitedly taught how to carry themſelves, does from the behaviour of thoſe who have had a more free and generous education.

II. In matter of example. There are many parents whoſe lives are exemplary in the main, who yet ſeem to uſe too great a freedom before their children. It is an old rule, and I think a very good one,

Maxima debetur pueris reverentia:

"There is a very great reverence due to children." There are many things which are not ſins, and therefore may lawfully be done, which yet it may not be prudent and expedient to do before all perſons. There are ſome words and actions ſo trivial and light, that they are not fit

fit to be said or done before those for whom we have a reverence. There is a certain freedom of conversation which is only proper among equals in age and quality, which if we use before our superiors and betters, we seem to contemn them; if before our inferiors, they will go nigh to contemn us.

It ought to be considered, that children do not understand the exact limits of good and evil: so that if in our words or actions we go to the utmost bounds of that which is lawful, we shall be in danger of shewing them the way to that which is unlawful. Children are not wont to be careful of their steps; and therefore we will not venture them to play about a precipice, or near a dangerous place; where yet men that will take care, may go safely enough. And therefore parents should be very careful to keep their children from the confines of evil, and at as great a distance from it as they can. And to this end their words and actions should ever be tempered with gravity and circumspection, that children may not see or hear any thing which may acquaint them with the approaches to sin, or carry them to the borders of vice; lest they should not stop just there, but take a step further than you intended they should go.

III. In matter of reproof and correction. Many religious and careful parents are guilty of two great miscarriages in this part of education.

1. Of too much rigour and severity; which, especially with some sort of tempers, hath very ill success. The first experiment that should be made upon children should be, to allure them to their duty; and by reasonable inducements to gain them to the love of goodness; by praise and reward, and sometimes by shame and disgrace: and if this will do, there will be no occasion to proceed to severity; especially not to great severities, which are very unsuitable to human nature. A mixture of prudent and seasonable reproof or correction, when there is occasion for it, may do very well; but whips are not *the cords of a man:* human nature may be driven by them, but it must be led by sweeter and gentler ways.

Speusippus caused the pictures of joy and gladness to be set round about his school, to signify, that the business of education ought to be rendered as pleasant as

may

may be. And indeed children ſtand in need of all the enticements and encouragements to learning and goodneſs. *Metus haud diuturni magiſter officii*, ſays Tully: "Fear alone will not teach a man his duty, and hold "him to it for any long time;" for when that is removed, nature will break looſe, and do like itſelf: beſides that frequent corrections make puniſhments to loſe their awe and force, and are apt to ſpoil the diſpoſition of children, and to harden them againſt ſhame; and after a while they will deſpiſe correction, when they find they can endure it.

Great ſeverities do often work an effect quite contrary to that which was intended; and many times thoſe who were bred up in a very ſevere ſchool, hate learning ever after, for the ſake of the cruelty that was uſed to force it upon them. And ſo likeways an endeavour to bring children to piety and goodneſs, by unreaſonable ſtrictneſs and rigour, does often beget in them a laſting diſguſt and prejudice againſt religion; and teacheth them, as Eraſmus ſays, *virtutem ſimul odiſſe et noſſe*; "to hate virtue "at the ſame time that they teach them to know it." For by this means virtue is repreſented to the minds of children under a great diſadvantage, and good and evil are brought too near together; ſo that, whenever they think of religion and virtue, they remember the ſeverity which was wont to accompany the inſtructions about it, and the natural hatred which men have for puniſhment is by this means derived upon religion itſelf. And indeed, how can it be expected that children ſhould love their duty, when they never hear of it but with a handful of rods ſhaked over them?

I inſiſt upon this the more, becauſe I do not remember to have obſerved more notorious inſtances of great miſcarriage, than in the children of very ſtrict and ſevere parents. Of which I can give no other account but this, that nature, when it is thus overcharged, recoils the more terribly. It hath ſomething in it like the ſpring of an engine, which, being forcibly preſſed, does, upon the firſt liberty, return back with ſo much the greater violence. In like manner the vitious diſpoſitions of children, when reſtrained merely by the ſeverity of parents,

do

do break forth ſtrangely as ſoon as ever they get looſe, and from under their diſcipline.

2. Another miſcarriage in this matter is, when reproof and correction are accompanied and managed with paſſion. This is to betray one fault, and perhaps a greater, in the puniſhment of another. Beſides that this makes reproof and correction to look like revenge and hatred; which uſually does not perſuade and reform, but provoke and exaſperate. And this probably may be one reaſon of the Apoſtle's admonition, *Parents, provoke not your children unto wrath*; becauſe that is never likely to have any good effect. Correction is a kind of phyſic, which ought never to be adminiſtered in paſſion, but upon counſel and good advice.

And that paſſion is incident to parents upon this occaſion, the Apoſtle tells us, when he ſays, Heb. xii. 10. that *the parents of our fleſh chaſten us for their pleaſure*; that is, they do it many times to gratify their paſſion; *but God* chaſtens us *for our profit*; not in anger, but with a deſign to do us good. And can we have a better pattern than our heavenly Father to imitate?

A father is, as it were, a prince and a judge in his family: there he gives laws, and inflicts cenſures and puniſhments upon offenders. But how misbecoming a thing would it be, to ſee a judge paſs ſentence upon a man in choler? It is the ſame thing to ſee a father, in the heat and fury of his paſſion, correct his child. If a father could but ſee himſelf in this mood, and how ill his paſſion becomes him, inſtead of being angry with his child, he would be out of patience with himſelf. I proceed to the next thing I propoſed, namely,

Fourthly, To make out the truth of the propoſition contained in the text, by ſhewing, how the good education of children comes to be of ſo great advantage, and to have ſo good and laſting an influence upon their whole lives.

I confeſs there are ſome wild and ſavage natures, monſtrous and prodigious tempers, hard as the rocks, and barren as the ſand upon the ſea-ſhore; which diſcover ſtrong and early propenſions to vice, and a violent antipathy to goodneſs. Such tempers are next to deſperate;

but yet they are not utterly intractable to the grace o God, and the religious care of parents.

I hope such tempers as these are very rare, thougl God is pleased they should sometimes appear in th world, as instances of the great corruption and degene racy of human nature, and of the great need of divin grace. But surely there is no temper that is absolutel and irrecoverably prejudiced against that which is good This would be so terrible an objection against the provi dence of God, as would be very hard to be answered God be thanked, most tempers are tractable to good e ducation; and there is very great probability of the goo success of it, if it be carefully and wisely managed.

And, for the confirmation of this truth, I shall instanc in two very great advantages of a religious and virtuou education of children.

1. It gives religion and virtue the advantage of the fir possession.

2. The advantage of habit and custom.

1. Good education gives religion and virtue the ad vantage of the first possession. The mind of man is a active principle, and will be employed about somethin or other. It cannot stand idle, and so will therefore tak up with that which first offers itself. So soon as reaso puts forth itself, and the understanding begins to be ex ercised, the mind of man discovers a natural thirst afte knowledge, and greedily drinks in that which come first. If it have not the waters of life, and the pur streams of goodness to allay that thirst, it will seek t quench it in the filthy puddles and impure pleasures o this world.

Now, since children will be busying their minds abou something, it is good that they should be entertaine with the best things, and with the best notions and prin ciples of which their understanding and age are capable It is a happy thing to be principled, and, as I may say prejudiced the better way; and that religion should ge the first possession of their hearts. For it is certainly a great advantage to religion to be planted in a tender anc fresh soil. And if parents be careless, and neglect thi advantage, the enemy will be sure to sow his tares whilf the husbandman is asleep.

Therefore

Therefore we ſhould prevent the devil, by giving God and goodneſs an early poſſeſſion of our children, and by getting him into their hearts betimes. Poſſeſſion is a great point; and it is of mighty conſequence to have nature planted with good ſeeds, before vitious inclinations ſpring up, and grow into ſtrength and habit.

I know that there is a ſpiteful proverb current in the world, and the devil hath taken care to ſpread it to the diſcouragement of an early piety, "A young ſaint, and an old devil;" but notwithſtanding this, a young ſaint is moſt likely to prove an old one. Solomon, to be ſure, was of this mind; and I make no doubt but he made as wiſe and true proverbs as any body hath done ſince; him only excepted who was a much greater and wiſer man than Solomon.

2. Good education gives likeways the advantage of habit and cuſtom; and cuſtom is of mighty force. It is, as Pliny, in one of his epiſtles, ſays of it, *Efficaciſſimus omnium rerum magiſter:* "The moſt powerful and effectual maſter in every kind." It is an acquired, and a ſort of ſecond nature; and next to nature itſelf, a principle of greateſt power. Cuſtom bears a huge ſway in all human actions. Men love thoſe things, and do them with eaſe, to which they have been long inured and accuſtomed. And, on the contrary, men go againſt cuſtom with great regret and uneaſineſs.

And among all others, that cuſtom is moſt ſtrong which is begun in childhood; and we ſee in experience, the ſtrange power of education in forming perſons to religion and virtue. Now, education is nothing but certain cuſtoms planted in childhood, and which have taken deep root whilſt nature was tender.

We ſee likeways in common experience, how dangerous an evil habit and cuſtom is, and how hard to be altered. Therefore the Cretians, when they would curſe a man to purpoſe, wiſhed, that the gods would engage him in ſome bad cuſtom, looking upon a man after that to be irrecoverably loſt. So on the other ſide, to be engaged in a good cuſtom, is an unſpeakable advantage; eſpecially for children to be habituated to a holy and virtuous courſe, before the habits of ſin and vice have taken root, and are confirmed in them.

We are too naturally inclined to that which is evil: but yet this ought not to discourage us; because it is certain in experience, that a contrary custom hath done much in many cases, even where nature hath been strongly inclined the other way. Demosthenes did, by great resolution, and almost infinite pains, and after a long habit, alter the natural imperfection of his speech, and even, in despite of nature, became the most eloquent man perhaps that ever lived. And this amounts even to a demonstration; for what hath been done, may be done.

So that it is not universally true which Aristotle says, "that nature cannot be altered." It is true indeed, in the instance which he gives, of throwing a stone upward. "You cannot (says he) by any custom, nay, though you "fling it up never so often, teach a stone to ascend of "itself." And so it is in many other instances, in which nature is peremptory. But nature is not always so; but sometimes hath a great latitude; as we see in young trees; which, though they naturally grow streight up, yet, being gently bent, may be made to grow any way. But, above all, moral inclinations and habits do admit of great alteration, and are subject to the power of a contrary custom.

Indeed children, when they come to be men, should take great care that they do not owe their religion only to custom; but they should, upon consideration and due examination of the grounds of it, so far as they are capable of doing it, make it their choice: and yet, for all that, we must not deny the best religion in the world this greatest advantage of all other. It is certainly a great happiness for children to be inclined to that which, when they come to understand themselves, they would make their choice, if they were indifferent; but an indifferency cannot be preserved in children: and therefore, since they will certainly be biassed one way or other, there is all the reason in the world why we should endeavour to biass them the better way. Parents may often mistake about what is best; but if they love their children, they cannot but wish and endeavour that they may be good, and do what is best.

I come now to the last head I proposed; which was, *Fifthly*, To endeavour, by the most powerful arguments

ments I can offer, to ſtir up and perſuade thoſe whoſe duty this is, to diſcharge it with great care and conſcience.

If the foregoing diſcourſe be true, what can be ſaid to thoſe who are guilty in the higheſt degree of the groſs neglect of this great duty; who neither by inſtruction, nor example, nor reſtraint from evil, do endeavour to make their children good? Some parents are ſuch monſters, I had almoſt ſaid devils, as not to *know how to give good things to their children*; but inſtead of *bread, give them a ſtone*; inſtead of *fiſh, give them a ſerpent*; inſtead of *an egg, give them a ſcorpion*; as our Saviour expreſſeth it.

Theſe are evil indeed, who train up their children for ruin and deſtruction; in the ſervice of the devil, and in the trade and myſtery of iniquity; who, inſtead of teaching them *the fear of the Lord*, infuſe into them the principles of Atheiſm, and irreligion, and profaneneſs: inſtead of teaching them to love and reverence religion, they teach them to hate and deſpiſe it, and to make a mock both of ſin and holineſs: inſtead of training them up in the knowledge of *the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make men wiſe unto ſalvation*, they do *ædificare ad gehennam*, "they edify them for hell," by teaching them to profane that holy book, and to abuſe the word of God, which they ought to tremble at, by turning it into jeſt and raillery: inſtead of teaching them to pray, and bleſs the name of God, they teach them to blaſpheme that great and terrible name, and to profane it by their continual oaths and imprecations; and inſtead of bringing them to God's church, they carry them to the devil's chapels, to playhouſes, and places of debauchery, thoſe ſchools and nurſeries of lewdneſs and vice.

Thus they who ought to be the great teachers and examples of holineſs and virtue, are the chief encouragers and patterns of vice and wickedneſs to their children; and inſtead of reſtraining them from evil, they countenance them in it, and check all forward inclinations to goodneſs; till at laſt they *make them ten times more the children of wrath*, than they were by that corrupt nature which they derived from them: and hereby *treaſure up*, both *for* their children and *themſelves, wrath*

againſt the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

But I hope there are few or none ſuch here. They do not uſe to frequent God's houſe and worſhip. And therefore I ſhall apply myſelf to thoſe who are not ſo notoriouſly guilty in this kind, though they are greatly faulty in neglecting the good education of their children. And, for the greater conviction of ſuch parents, I ſhall offer to them the following conſiderations.

1. Conſider what a ſad inheritance you have conveyed to your children. You have tranſmitted to them corrupt and depraved natures, evil and vitious inclinations you have begotten them in your own image and likeneſs, ſo that *by nature* they are *children of wrath*. Now, methinks, parents, that have a due ſenſe of this, ſhould be very ſolicitous, by the beſt means they can uſe, to free them from that curſe; by endeavouring to correct thoſe perverſe diſpoſitions and curſed inclinations which they have tranſmitted to them. Surely you ought to do all you can to repair that broken eſtate which from you is deſcended upon them.

When a man hath by treaſon tainted his blood, and forfeited his eſtate, with what grief and regret doth he look upon his children, and think of the injury which hath been done to them by his fault? and how ſolicitous is he, before he die, to petition the king for favour to his children? How earneſtly doth he charge his friend to be careful of them, and kind to them? that, by theſe means, he may make the beſt reparation he can of their fortune, which hath been ruined by his fault.

And have parents ſuch a tenderneſs for their children in reference to their eſtate and condition in this world and have they none for the good eſtate of their ſouls, and their eternal condition in another world? If you are ſenſible, that their blood is tainted, and that their beſt fortunes are ruined by your ſad misfortune; why do you not beſtir yourſelves for the repairing of God's image in them? why do you not *travel in birth till Chriſt be formed in them?* why do you not pray earneſtly to God and give him no reſt, who hath reprived, and it may be pardoned you, that he would extend his grace to them alſo, and grant them the bleſſings of his new covenant?

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All your children are begotten of the bond woman; therefore we should pray as Abraham did, *O that Ishmael may live in thy sight!* O that these sons of Hagar may be heirs of a blessing!

2. Consider, in the next place, that good education is the very best inheritance that you can leave to your children. It is a wise saying of Solomon, Eccl. vii. 11: that *wisdom is good with an inheritance:* but surely an inheritance without wisdom and virtue to manage it, is a very pernicious thing. And yet how many parents are there, who omit no care and industry to get an estate, that they may leave it to their children, but use no means to form their minds and manners for the right use and enjoyment of it; without which it had been much happier for them to have been left in great poverty and straits?

Dost thou love thy child? This is true love to any one, to do the best for him we can. Of all your toil and labour for your children, this may be all the fruit they may reap, and all that they may live to enjoy, the advantage of a good education: all other things are uncertain. You may raise your children to honour, and settle a noble estate upon them to support it: you may leave them, as you think, to faithful guardians, and, by kindness and obligation, procure them many friends: and, when you have done all this, their guardians may prove unfaithful and treacherous; and, in the changes and revolutions of the world, their honours may slip from under them, and their *riches may take themselves wings, and fly away:* and when these are gone, and they come to be nipped with the frosts of adversity, their friends will fall off like leaves in autumn. *This is a sore evil, which* yet *I have seen under the sun.*

But if the good education of your children hath made them wise and virtuous, you have provided an inheritance for them which is out of the reach of fortune, and *cannot be taken from them.* Crates, the philosopher, used to stand in the highest places of the city, and cry out to the inhabitants, "O ye people! why do you toil to get "estates for your children, when you take no care of "their education?" This is, as Diogenes said, to take care of the shoe, but none of the foot that is to wear it;

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to take great pains for an eſtate for your children, but none at all to teach them how to uſe it; that is, to take great care to undo them, but none to make them happy.

3. Conſider, that, by a careful and religious education of your children, you provide for your own comfort and happineſs. However they happen to prove, you will have the comfort of a good conſcience, and of having done your duty. If they be good, they are matter of great comfort and joy to their parents. *A wiſe ſon* (ſaith Solomon) *maketh a glad father*. It is a great ſatisfaction to ſee that which we have planted to thrive and grow up; to find the good effect of our care and induſtry, and that the work of our hands doth proſper. The ſon of Sirach, among ſeveral things for which he reckons a man happy, mentions this in the firſt place, *He that hath joy of his children*, Ecclus xxv. 7.

On the contrary, in wicked children the honour of a family fails, our name withers, and in the next generation will be quite blotted out: whereas a hopeful poſterity is a proſpect of a kind of eternity. We cannot leave a better and more laſting monument of ourſelves, than in wiſe and virtuous children. Buildings and books are but dead things, in compariſon of theſe living memorials of ourſelves.

By the good education of your children, you provide for yourſelves ſome of the beſt comforts, both for this world and the other. For this world; and that at ſuch a time when you moſt ſtand in need of comfort, I mean the time of ſickneſs and old age. Wiſe men have been wont to lay up ſome *præſidia ſenectutis*, ſomething to ſupport them in that gloomy and melancholy time, as books, and friends, or the like. But there is no ſuch external comfort at ſuch a time as good and dutiful children. They will then be the *light of our eyes*, and the cordial of our fainting ſpirits; and will recompenſe all our former care of them by their preſent care of us: and when we are decaying and withering away, we ſhall have the pleaſure to ſee our youth, as it were, renewed, and ourſelves flouriſhing again in our children. The ſon of Sirach, ſpeaking of the comfort which a good father hath in a well educated ſon, *Though he die*, (ſays he) *yet he is as though he were not dead: for he hath left one behind him that*

hat is like himself. While he lived, he saw and rejoiced n him; and when he died, he was not sorrowful, Ecclus xx. 4. 5.

Whereas, on the contrary, *a foolish son is* (as Solomon ells us) *a heaviness to his mother*; the miscarriage of a hild being apt most tenderly to affect the mother. Such parents as neglect their children, do, as it were, provide so many pains and aches for themselves against they come to be old. And rebellious children are, to their nfirm and aged parents, so many aggravations of an evil day, so many burdens of their age. They help to ow them down, and to *bring their gray hairs* so much he sooner *with sorrow to the grave.* They do usually repay their parents all the neglects of their education, by their undutiful carriage towards them.

And good children will likewise be an unspeakable comfort to us in the other world. When we come to appear before God at the day of judgment, to be able to say to him, *Lo, here am I, and the children which thou hast given me*; how will this comfort our hearts, and make us lift up our heads with joy in that day?

4. Consider, that the surest foundation of the public welfare and happiness is laid in the good education of children. Families are increased by children, and cities and nations are made up of families. And this is a matter of so great concernment, both to religion and the civil happiness of a nation, that anciently the best constituted commonwealths did commit this care to the magistrate more than to parents.

When Antipater demanded of the Spartans fifty of their children for hostages, they offered rather to deliver to him twice as many men; so much did they value the loss of their country's education. But now amongst us this work lies chiefly upon parents. There are several ways of reforming men, by the laws of the civil magistrate, and by the public preaching of ministers; but the most likely and hopeful reformation of the world must begin with children. Wholesome laws and good sermons are but slow and late ways. The timely and the most compendious way is, good education. This may be an effectual prevention of evil: whereas all after-ways

ter-ways are but remedies, which do always suppose some neglect and omission of timely care.

And because our laws leave so much to parents, our care should be so much the greater: and we should remember, that we bring up our children for the public; and that, if they live to be men, as they come out of our hands, they will prove a public happiness or mischief to the age. So that we can no way better deserve of mankind, and be greater benefactors to the world, than by peopling it with a righteous offspring. Good children are the hopes of posterity; and we cannot leave the world a better legacy than well-disciplined children. This gives the world the best security, that religion will be propagated to posterity, and that the *generations to come shall know God; and the children that are to be born, shall fear the Lord.*

This was the great glory of Abraham, next to his being *the friend of God*, that he was *the father of the faithful.* And the careful education of children, *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,* is so honourable to parents, that God himself would not pass it by in Abraham without special mention of it to his everlasting commendation: *I know Abraham,* (says God) *that he will command his children, and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord, and to do justice and judgment,* Gen. xviii. 19.

5. Consider yet further the great evils consequent upon this neglect. And they are manifold. But, not to enlarge particularly upon them, they all end in this, the final miscarriage and ruin of children. Do but leave depraved corrupt nature to itself, and it will take its own course; and the end of it, in all probability, will be miserable.

If the generous seeds of religion and virtue be not carefully sown in the tender minds of children, and those seeds be not cultivated by good education, there will certainly spring up briers and thorns: of which parents will not only feel the inconveniences, but every body else that comes near them.

Neglectis urenda filix innascitur agris.

If the ground be not planted with something that is good,

good, it will bring forth that which is either uſeleſs or hurtful, or both: for nature is ſeldom barren; it will either bring forth uſeful plants, or weeds.

We are naturally inclined to evil; and the neglect of education puts children upon a kind of neceſſity of becoming what they are naturally inclined to be. Do but let them alone, and they will ſoon be habituated to ſin and vice. And when they are once accuſtomed to do evil, they have loſt their liberty and choice. They are then hardly capable of good counſel and inſtruction; or, if they be patient to hear it, they have no power to follow it, being bound in the chains of their ſins, and led captive by Satan at his pleaſure. And, when they have brought themſelves into this condition, their ruin ſeems to be ſealed; and, without a miracle of God's grace, they are never to be reclaimed.

Nor doth the miſchief of this neglect end here; but it extends itſelf to the public, and to poſterity. If we neglect the good education of our children, they will, in all probability, prove bad men; and theſe will neglect their children; and ſo the foundation of an endleſs miſchief is laid; and our poſterity will be bad members both of church and commonwealth.

If they be neglected in matter of inſtruction, they will either be ignorant or erroneous; either they will not mind religion, or they will diſturb the church with new and wild opinions. And I fear that the neglect of inſtructing and catechizing youth, of which this age hath been ſo groſsly guilty, hath made it ſo fruitful of errors and ſtrange opinions.

But if, beſides this, no care be taken of their lives and manners, they will become burdens of the earth, and peſts of human ſociety, and ſo much poiſon and infection let abroad into the world.

6. and laſtly, Parents ſhould often conſider, that the neglect of this duty will not only involve them in the inconvenience, and ſhame, and ſorrow of their childrens miſcarriage, but in a great meaſure in the guilt of it: they will have a great ſhare in all the evil they do, and be in ſome ſort chargeable with all the ſins they commit. If the children bring forth wild and ſowre grapes, the parents teeth will be ſet on edge.

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The temporal miſchiefs and inconveniences whic come from the careleſs education of children, as to cr dit, health, and eſtate, all which do uſually ſuffer by th vitious and lewd courſes of your children; theſe, m thinks, ſhould awaken your care and diligence. B what is this to the guilt which will redound to you u on their account? Part of all their wickedneſs will b put upon your ſcore; and poſſibly the ſins which the commit many years after you are dead and gone, wi follow you into the other world, and bring new feuel t hell, to heat that furnace hotter upon you.

However, this is certain, that parents muſt one da be accountable for all their neglects of their children and ſo likeways ſhall miniſters and maſters of familie for their people and ſervants, ſo far as they had the charg of them.

And what will parents be able to ſay to God at th day of judgment, for all their neglects of their childre in matter of inſtruction, and example, and reſtraint fro evil? How will it make your ears to tingle, when Go ſhall ariſe terribly to judgment, and ſay to you, "Be "hold, the children which I have given you: the "were ignorant, and you inſtructed them not: the "made themſelves vile, and you reſtrained them not "Why did you not teach them at home, and bring ther "to church, to the public ordinances and worſhip o "God, and train them up to the exerciſe of piety an "devotion? But you did not only neglect to give ther "good inſtruction, but you gave them bad example "and lo, they have followed you to hell, to be an addi "tion to your torment there.

"Unnatural wretches! that have thus neglected, and "by your neglect, deſtroyed thoſe, whoſe happineſs, b "ſo many bonds of duty and affection, you were oblige "to procure. Behold, the books are now open, an "there is not one prayer upon record that ever you pu "up for your children; there is no memorial, no no "ſo much as of one hour that ever was ſeriouſly ſpen "to train them up to a ſenſe of God, and to the know "ledge of their duty; but, on the contrary, it appears "that you have many ways contrived their miſery, and "contributed to their ruin, and helped forward their "damnation.

" damnation. How could you be thus unnatural? how " could you thus hate your own flesh, and hate your " own souls? How much better had it been for them, " and how much better for you, that they had never " been born?"

Would not such a heavy charge as this make every joint of you to tremble? Will it not cut you to the heart, and pierce your very souls, to have your children challenge you in that day; and say to you, one by one, " Had you been as careful to teach me the good know- " ledge of the Lord, as I was capable of learning it; " had you been but as forward to instruct me in my du- " ty, as I was ready to have hearkened to it, it had not " been with me as it is at this day; I had not now stood " trembling here in a fearful expectation of the eternal " doom which is just ready to be passed upon me. Cur- " sed be the man that begat me, and the paps that gave " me suck: it is to you that I must in a great measure " owe my everlasting undoing?" Would it not strike any of us with horror to be thus challenged and reproached by our children in that great and terrible day of the Lord?

I am not able to make so dreadful a representation of this matter as it deserves. But I would, by all this, if it be possible, awaken parents to a sense of their duty, and terrify them out of this gross and shameful neglect which so many are guilty of. For when I seriously consider how supinely remiss and unconcerned many parents are as to the religious education of their children, I cannot but think of that saying of Augustus concerning Herod, " Better be his dog than his child." I think it was spoken to another purpose; but it is true likeways to the purpose I am speaking of. Better be some mens dogs, or hawks, or horses, than their children: for they take a greater care to breed and train up these to their several ends and uses, than to breed up their children for eternal happiness.

Upon all these accounts, *train up a child in the way he should go*, that *when he is old, he may not depart from it*; that neither your children may be miserable by your fault, nor you by the neglect of so natural and necessary a duty towards them. God grant, that all that are concerned

may lay these things seriously to heart, for his mercies sake in Jesus Christ. To whom, with thee, O Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, both now and ever. *Amen.*

SERMON LIV.

Of the advantages of an early piety.

Preached in the church of St. Lawrence-Jewry, in the year 1662.

ECCLES. xii. 1.

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.

IN the former discourses, concerning the education of children, I have carried the argument through the state of childhood to the beginning of the next step of their age, which we call *youth*, when they come to exercise their reason, and to be fit to take upon themselves the performance of that solemn vow which was made for them by their sureties in baptism.

To encourage them to set seriously, and in good earnest about this work, I shall now add another discourse concerning the advantages of an early piety. And to this purpose I have chosen for the foundation of it these words of Solomon, in his book called *Ecclesiastes*, or *The Preacher*: *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.*

It will not be necessary to give an account of the context, any further than to tell you, that this book of the Royal preacher is a lively description of the vanity of the world in general, and particularly of the life of man. This is the main body of his sermon: in which there are here and there scattered many serious reflexions upon ourselves, and very weighty considerations to quicken our

our preparations for our latter end, and to put us in mind of *the days of darkneſs, which will be many*; as the Preacher tells us in the chapter before the text.

Among theſe is the admonition and advice in the words of the text; which do indeed concern thoſe that are young, but yet will afford uſeful matter of meditation to perſons of all ages and conditions whatſoever; of great thankfulneſs to Almighty God, from thoſe who, by the grace of God, and his bleſſing upon a pious education, have entered upon a religious courſe betimes; and of a deep ſorrow and repentance, to thoſe who have neglected and let ſlip this beſt opportunity of their lives, and of taking up a firm reſolution of redeeming that loſs, as much as is poſſible, by their future care and diligence: and to them more eſpecially who are grown old, and have not yet begun this great and neceſſary work, it will miniſter occaſion to reſolve upon a ſpeedy retreat, and, without any further delay, to return to God and their duty, leſt the opportunity of doing it, which is now almoſt quite ſpent, be loſt for ever.

The text contains a duty, which is, to *to remember our Creator*; and a limitation of it more eſpecially to one particular age and time of our life; *in the days of our youth*; not to exclude any other age, but to lay a particular emphaſis and weight upon this. *Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth*; that is, more eſpecially in this age of thy life; to intimate to us, both that this is the fitteſt ſeaſon, and that we cannot begin this work too ſoon.

And this is further illuſtrated by the oppoſition of it to old age: *While the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, of which thou ſhalt ſay, I have no pleaſure in them.* This is a deſcription of old age, the evils whereof are continually growing; and which, in reſpect of the cares and griefs, the diſtempers and infirmities which uſually attend it, is rather a burden than a pleaſure.

In the handling of theſe words, I ſhall do theſe three things.

1. I ſhall conſider the nature of the act or duty here injoined; and that is, to *remember God.*

2. I ſhall conſider what there is in the notion of God

as *Creator*, which is more particularly apt to awaken and oblige us to the remembrance of him.

3. I shall consider the limitation of this duty more especially to this particular age of our lives, *the days of our youth*; why we should begin this work then, and not put it off to the time of old age.

I. I shall consider the nature of the act or duty here injoined; which is, to *remember our Creator*. For the understanding of which expression, and others of the like nature in scripture, it is to be considered, that it is very usual in scripture, to express religion, and the whole duty of man, by some eminent act, or principle, or part of religion; sometimes by *the knowledge of God*, and by *faith in him*; and very frequently by *the fear*, and by *the love of God*; because these are the great principles and parts of religion: and so likeways, though not so frequently, religion is expressed by *the remembrance of God*. Now, *remembrance* is the actual thought of what we do habitually know. To *remember God*, is to have him actually in our minds, and, upon all proper occasions, to revive the thoughts of him; and, as David expresseth it, to *set him always before us*: *I set the Lord* (says he) *always before me*: that is, God was continually present in his mind and thoughts.

And, in opposition to this, we find wicked men in scripture described by the contrary quality, *forgetfulness of God*. So they are described in Job, chap. viii. 13, *Such are the paths of all that forget God*; that is, of the wicked. And the same description David gives of them, Psal. ix. 17. *The wicked* (says he) *shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God*. And elsewhere he gives the same character of a wicked man, Psal. x. 4. that *God is not in all his thoughts*.

And the course of a religious life is not unfitly expressed by our *remembrance of God*. For to remember a person or thing, is to call them to mind upon all proper and fitting occasions; to think actually of them, so as to do that which the remembrance of them does require or prompt us to. To remember a friend, is to be ready upon occasion to do him all good offices: to remember a kindness and benefit, is to be ready to acknowledge and requite it when there is an opportunity: to remember

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an injury, is to be ready to revenge it: and, in a word, to remember any thing, is to be mindful to do that which the memory of such a thing doth naturally suggest to us.

So that to *remember God*, is frequently, and in our most serious and retired thoughts, to consider, that there is such a being as God is, of all power and perfection, who made us and all other things, and hath given us laws to live by, suitable to our natures; and will call us to a strict account for our observance or violation of them, and accordingly reward or punish us; very often in this world, and to be sure in the other.

It is to revive often in our minds the thoughts of God, and of his infinite perfections, and to live continually under the power and awe of these apprehensions, that he is infinitely wise and good, holy and just; that he is always present with us, and observes what we do, and is intimate to our most secret thoughts, and *will bring every work into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil*; as the preacher tells us in the conclusion of this sermon.

The duty then here required of us is, so soon as we arrive at the use of reason, and the exercise of our understandings, to take God into consideration, and to begin a religious course of life betimes; to consecrate the beginning of our days, and the flower and strength of them to his service: whilst our mind is yet soft and tender, and in a great measure free from all other impressions, to be mindful of the being that is above us; and in all our designs and actions, to take God into consideration, and to do every thing in his fear, and with an eye to his glory. *Remember thy Creator*; that is, honour, fear, love, obey, and serve him; and, in a word, do every thing as becomes one that is mindful of God, and hath him continually in his thoughts.

II. I shall, in the next place, consider what there is in the notion of God as our *Creator*, that is more particularly apt to awaken and oblige men to the remembrance of God. The text does not barely require us *to remember God*; but to remember him as the author and founder of our beings: *Remember thy Creator*. And there is certainly some particular emphasis in it; so that God,

conſidered under the notion of our Creator, is apt to ſtrike us with a particular regard and awe of him: and that upon a threefold account; as creation is a ſenſible demonſtration to us, 1ſt, of the being; 2dly, of the power; and, 3dly, of the goodneſs of God.

1. Of his being. The creation is of all other the moſt ſenſible and obvious argument of a Deity. Other conſiderations may work upon our reaſon and underſtanding, but this doth, as it were, bring God down to our ſenſes. So often as we look up to heaven, or down upon the earth; upon ourſelves, or into ourſelves; upon the things without us, and round about us; which way ſoever we turn our eyes, we are encountered with plain evidences of a ſuperior being, which made us and all other things: every thing which we behold with our eyes doth in ſome way or other repreſent God to us, and bring him to our minds, ſo as we cannot avoid the ſight of him if we would. So the Pſalmiſt tells us, Pſal. xix. 1. *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament ſheweth the work of his hands.* And ſo likeways St. Paul. Rom. i. 20. *The inviſible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.*

2. As the creation is a demonſtration of God's infinite power. And this conſideration is apt to work upon our fear, the moſt wakeful paſſion of all other in the ſoul of man; inſomuch that the Atheiſt would fain aſcribe the original apprehenſion and belief of a deity to the natural fears of men: *Primus in orbe deos fecit timor:* "Fear firſt "made gods;" and by this means would fain perſuade us, that it is ſo far from being true that God is our Creator, that he is merely the creature of our own vain fear and imagination.

But ſurely this is very unreaſonable. For, if there be a God that made us, there is infinite reaſon why we ſhould ſtand in awe of him, and have him always in our mind and thoughts; becauſe he who made us, and all other things, if we neglect him, and forget ſo great a benefactor, can as eaſily make us miſerable, or turn us out of being. Therefore *remember thy Creator*; and deſpiſe or forget him at thy utmoſt peril.

3. As

3. As the creation is a demonſtration of the goodneſs of God to his creatures. This conſideration of God as our Creator, doth naturally ſuggeſt to our minds, that his goodneſs brought us into being: and that if being be a benefit, God is the fountain and author of it; that his goodneſs called us out of nothing, and made us to be what we are; for *of his good pleaſure we are, and were created.* He was under no neceſſity of doing it; for he was from eternal ages happy in himſelf before we were, and would have been ſo to all eternity, though we had never been; nor was it poſſible he could be under any obligation to us before we were.

And he is not only our Creator, as he gave us our beings at firſt; but likeways as we are preſerved and continued in life by the ſame goodneſs which firſt gave us life and breath; for *of his goodneſs we are*, as well as *were created.*

And can we forget ſo great a benefactor, and be *unmindful of the God that formed us?* Can we chuſe but remember the founder of our beings, the great patron and preſerver of our lives? And ſo ſoon as we arrive at the uſe of reaſon, and diſcover this great benefactor, to whom we owe our lives, and all the bleſſings of them, can we forbear to do homage to him, and to ſay with David, *O come, let us worſhip, and fall down and kneel before the Lord our maker: for he is the Lord our God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourſelves; we are his people, and the ſheep of his paſture?* I proceed to conſider, in the

III. Third and laſt place, the reaſon of the limitation of this duty more eſpecially to this particular age of our lives, *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou ſhalt ſay, I have no pleaſure in them. NOW; in the days of thy youth.* By which Solomon plainly deſigns two things.

1. To engage young perſons to begin this great and neceſſary work of religion betimes, and as ſoon as ever they are capable of taking it into conſideration: *Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth.* And the Son of Sirach, much to the ſame purpoſe, ſpeaking of one that in good earneſt applies his heart to wiſdom, deſcribes

deſcribes him in this manner, Ecclus xxxix. 5. *He will give his heart to reſort early to the Lord that made him*; which is the ſame with the expreſſion in the text, of *remembering our Creator in the days of our youth.*

2. To engage young perſons to ſet about this work preſently, and not to defer it and put it off to the future, as moſt are apt to do: *Remember NOW thy Creator in the days of thy youth:* eſpecially, not to adjourn it to the moſt unfit and improper time of all other, to the time of infirmity and old age: *NOW, in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou ſhalt ſay, I have no pleaſure in them; while the ſun, or the light, or the moon, or the ſtars, be not darkened,* &c.

And how much reaſon there is, to preſs both theſe conſiderations upon young perſons, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, in the following particulars.

1. Becauſe in this age of our lives we have the greateſt and moſt ſenſible obligation to *remember God our Creator: In the days of our youth,* when the bleſſing and benefit of life is new, and the memory of it freſh upon our minds. It ought not indeed to be ſo; but we find it true which Seneca ſays, *Nihil citius ſeneſcit quàm gratia,* "Nothing ſooner grows old and out of date, than obli-"gation;" and we are but too apt to forget what we have the greateſt reaſon to remember.

In this age of our life, when we begin to come to the free uſe and exercise of our reaſon, the firſt thing we are inſtructed in; and if we are not taught it, we ſhould, though perhaps more ſlowly, diſcover and find it out of ourſelves; I ſay, the firſt thing we are inſtructed in, and inquiſitive about, is, the author of our beings, and how we came into the world. And when God firſt appears to our minds, and we come by degrees clearly to underſtand by whoſe bounty and bleſſing it is that we are, and have been preſerved thus long, without our own care; principally by the providence of God, and, under him, by thoſe inſtruments which he hath raiſed, and preſerved for that purpoſe; when we conſider this, we cannot but be ſtrangely ſurpriſed, both with the novelty of the benefit, and the greatneſs of it.

And

And when we have well viewed ourſelves, and looked bout us, upon the creatures below us, all of them ſub-ct to our dominion and uſe; and when we conſider ſe-ouſly in what a noble rank and order of creatures we re placed, and how *fearfully and wonderfully we are made*, ot grovelling upon the earth, or bowed down to it, but f a beautiful and upright ſhape of body, and ſuch a ma-eſty of countenance as if we were all kings of the crea-ion; and, which is much more excellent than this, that ve are endued with minds and underſtandings, with rea-on and ſpeech, whereby we are capable, not only of converſing with and benefiting one another, but alſo of he knowledge, and friendſhip, and enjoyment of the beſt and moſt perfect of beings, God himſelf: I ſay, when we firſt conſider this, and meditate ſeriouſly upon t, can we poſſibly ever after forget God? Shall we not naturally break out into that inquiry which Elihu thinks ſo proper for man, that he wonders it is not in every man's mouth, *Where is God my maker, who teacheth me more than the beaſts of the earth, and maketh me wiſer than the fowls of heaven?* Job xxxv. 10. 11.

So that there as a very ſpecial obligation upon us to be mindful of God in this age of our lives, when we firſt come to the knowledge of him, and when the ſenſe of his favours is freſh and new to us; and not only ſo, but when the bleſſing of life is at the very beſt, and in its verdure and flower; when our health is in its ſtrength and vigour, and the pleaſures and enjoyments of life have their full taſte and perfect reliſh. So Job deſcribes the days of his youth, chap. xxix. 2. 3. 4. *Oh that I were as in months paſt, as in the days when God preſerved me; when his candle ſhined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkneſs; as I was in the days of my youth*, &c.

Indeed, when *the evil days* are once *come*, and thou art entered upon *the years* in which *thou* thyſelf *haſt no pleaſure*, there might be ſome ſort of pretence then to forget God; becauſe then life begins to wither and decay, and not only the gloſs and beauty, but even the comfort and ſweetneſs of it is gone; and it becomes an inſipid and taſteleſs thing. *But thou art inexcuſable, O man, whoever thou art*, if thou art unmindful of God in the

the beſt age of thy life, and when the ſenſe of his bene fits ought, upon all accounts, to make the ſtrongeſt an deepeſt impreſſions upon thy mind.

2. The reaſon will be yet ſtronger to put us upon this if we conſider, that, notwithſtanding the great obligatio which lies upon us, to *remember our Creator in the days o our youth*, we are moſt apt at that time, of all other, t forget him. For that which is the great bleſſing of youth is alſo the great danger of it; I mean the health an proſperity of it: and though men have then leaſt reaſon yet they are moſt apt to forget God, in the height o pleaſure, and in the abundance of all things.

Youth is extremely addicted to pleaſure, becauſe it i moſt capable and moſt ſenſible of it; and where we ar moſt apt to be tranſported, there we are moſt apt t tranſgreſs. Nothing does ſo beſot the mind, and ex tinguiſh in it all ſenſe of divine things, as ſenſual plea ſures. If we fall in love with them, they will take of our thoughts from religion, and ſteal away our heart from God: *For no man can ſerve two maſters*; and *th carnal mind is enmity againſt God.*

Beſides, that youth is raſh and inconſiderate, becauſe unexperienced; and, conſequently, not apt to be cautious and prudent, no not as to the future concernments of this temporal life; much leſs of that which ſeems to be at ſo much a greater diſtance, and for that reaſon is ſo very ſeldom in our thoughts.

3. Becauſe this age is of all other the fitteſt and beſt to begin a religious courſe of life. And this does not contradict the former argument, though it ſeems to do ſo; for, as it is true of children, that they are moſt prone to be idle, and yet fitteſt to learn; ſo in the caſe we are ſpeaking of, both are true, that youth is an age wherein we are too apt, if left to ourſelves, to forget God and religion, and yet at the ſame time fitteſt to receive the impreſſions of it.

Youth is *ætas diſciplinæ*, "the proper age of diſci-"pline;" very obſequious and tractable, fit to receive any kind of impreſſion, and to imbibe any tincture: Now, we ſhould lay hold of this golden opportunity. This age of ſuppleneſs, and obedience, and patience for labour, ſhould be plied by parents, before that rigour and

nd ſtiffneſs which grows with years come on too faſt. Childhood and youth are choice ſeaſons for the planting f religion and virtue; and if parents and teachers ſleep n this ſeed-time, they are ill husbandmen: for this is *he time of plowing and ſowing.*

This age is certainly the moſt proper for inſtruction: ccording to that of the prophet, Iſ. xxviii. 9. 10. *Whom ſhall he teach knowledge? and whom ſhall he make o underſtand doctrine? them that are weaned from the ilk, and drawn from the breaſts. For precept muſt be upn precept, and line upon line, here a little and there a ittle.* And the ſooner this is done, the better; only hings muſt be inſtilled into them gently, and by degrees.

It is a noted ſaying of Ariſtotle, "That young per- ' ſons are not fit to hear lectures of moral philoſophy;" ecauſe at that age paſſion is ſo predominant and unruy: by which, I think, he only means, that the minds of oung perſons are leaſt prepared to receive the precepts of morality, and to ſubmit to them; but that he does ot hereby intend, that therefore no care ought to be uſed to form the minds and manners of youth to virtue nd goodneſs. He certainly underſtood the nature and power of evil habits too well to be of that mind; and conſequently muſt think, that the principles of morality ought, with great care and diligence, to be inſtilled into young perſons betimes; becauſe they, of all other, have the moſt need of this kind of inſtruction, and this age is the moſt proper ſeaſon for it: and the leſs their minds are prepared for it, ſo much the more pains ought to be taken with them, that they may be taught to govern and ſubdue their paſſions, before they grow too ſtiff and headſtrong. So that if the ſeeds of religion and virtue be not planted in our younger years, what is to be expected in old age? according to that of the ſon of Sirach, Ecclus xxv. 3. *If thou haſt gathered nothing in thy youth, how canſt thou expect to find any thing in thine age?*

Young years are tender and eaſily wrought upon, apt to be moulded into any faſhion; they are *udum et molle lutum*; like "moiſt and ſoft clay," which is pliable to any form, but ſoon grows hard, and then nothing is to be made of it. It is a very difficult thing to make impreſſions

preſſions upon age, and to deface the evil which hath been deeply imprinted upon young and tender minds. When good inſtruction hath been neglected at firſt, conceited ignorance doth commonly take poſſeſſion, and obſtruct all the paſſages through which knowledge and wiſdom ſhould enter into us.

Upon this conſideration, the work of religion ſhould be begun betimes; becauſe it is a mighty advantage to any thing to be planted in a ground that is newly broken up. It is juſt the ſame thing for young perſons to be entered into a religious courſe, and to have their minds habituated to virtue before vitious cuſtoms have got place and ſtrength in us: for whoever ſhall attempt this afterwards, will meet with infinite difficulty and oppoſition, and muſt diſpute his ground by inches.

It is good therefore to do that which muſt be done one time or other, when it is eaſieſt to be done; when we may do it with the greateſt advantage, and are likely to meet with the leaſt and weakeſt oppoſition. We ſhould anticipate vice, and prevent the devil and the world, by letting God into our hearts betimes, and giving religion the firſt ſeiſin and poſſeſſion of our ſoul. This is the time of ſowing our ſeed, which muſt by no means be neglected: for the ſoul will not lie fallow; good or evil will come up. If our minds be not cultivated by religion, ſin and vice will get the poſſeſſion of them: but if our tender years be ſeaſoned with the knowledge and fear of God, this in all probability will have a good influence upon the following courſe of our lives.

In a word, this age of our lives is proper for labour and conflict; becauſe youth is full of heat and vigour of courage and reſolution, to enterprize and effect difficult things.

This heat indeed renders young perſons very unfit to adviſe and direct themſelves; and therefore they have need to be adviſed and directed by thoſe who are wiſer and more experienced: but yet this heat makes them very fit for practice and action; for though they are backward at counſel, they are admirable at execution, when the heat is well directed; they have a great deal of vivacity and quickneſs, of courage and conſtancy in the way wherein they are ſet.

Beſide

Besides that youth hath a great sense of honour and virtue, of praise and commendation, which are of great force to engage young persons to attempt worthy and excellent things: for hope and confidence, strength and courage, with which sense of honour and desire of praise are apt to inspire them, are admirable instruments of victory and mastery in any kind: and these are proper and most peculiar to youth: *I write unto you, young men,* (saith St. John) *because ye are strong, and have overcome the evil one.*

And, besides the spirit and vigour of youth, young persons have several other qualities which make them very capable of learning any thing that is good. They are apt to believe, because they have not been often deceived: and this is a very good quality in a learner. And they are full of hopes; which will encourage them to attempt things even beyond their strength; because hope is always of the future, and the life of young persons is in a great measure before them, and yet to come. And, which is a good bridle to restrain them from that which is evil, they are commonly very modest and bashful: and, which is also a singular advantage, they are more apt to do that which is honest and commendable, than that which is gainful and profitable; being in a great measure free from *the love of money,* which experience, as well as the apostle, tells us, *is the root of all evil.* Children are very seldom covetous, because they have seldom been bitten by want.

4. This is the most acceptable time of all other, because it is the first of our age. Under the law, the first fruits and the first-born were God's: in like manner we should devote the first of our age and time to him. God is the first and most excellent of beings; and therefore it is fit that the prime of our age, and the excellency of our strength, should be dedicated to him and his service.

An early piety must needs be very acceptable and pleasing to God. Our blessed Lord took great pleasure to see *little children come unto him*; an emblem of the pleasure he takes that men should list themselves betimes in his service. St. John was the youngest of all the disciples, and our Saviour had a very particular kindness and

affection for him; for he is said to be *the disciple whom Jesus loved.*

It is a good sign that we value God as we ought, and have a true esteem for his service, when we can find in our hearts to give him our good days, and the years which we ourselves have pleasure in; and that we have a grateful sense of his benefits, and of our mighty obligation to him, when we make the quickest and best returns we can, and think nothing too good to render to him from whom we have received all.

It is likeways an argument of great sincerity, which is the soul of all religion and virtue, when a man devotes himself to God betimes; because it is a good evidence that he is not drawn by those forcible constraints or driven to God by that pressing necessity which lies upon men in time of sickness and old age. And, on the contrary, it cannot but be very displeasing to God, to be neglected by us when we are in the flower and vigour of our age. When our blood is warm, and our spirits quick, and our parts are at the best, then to think ourselves too good to serve God, what an affront is this to him, who hath deserved so infinitely well of us, and beyond the best and utmost that we can possibly do?

Besides that there is a peculiar kind of grace and loveliness in the worthy and excellent actions of young persons, great things being hardly expected from them at that age. Early habits of virtue, like new cloths upon a young and comely body, sit very gracefully upon a straight and well-shaped mind, and do mightily become it.

As there is joy in heaven at the conversion of a great and old sinner; so it cannot but be a very delightful spectacle to God and angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, to see a young person besieged by powerful temptations on every side, to acquit himself gloriously, and resolutely to hold out against the most violent assaults: to behold one, in the prime and flower of his age, that is courted by pleasures and honours, by the devil, and all the bewitching vanities of this world, to reject all these, and to cleave stedfastly to God; nay, to frown upon all these temptations, and to look down upon them with indignation and scorn; and to say, Let those

those doat upon these things, who know no better; let them adore sensual pleasures and lying vanities, who are ignorant of the sincere and solid pleasures of religion and virtue; let them run into the arms of temptation, who can forget God their creator, their preserver, and *the guide of their youth:* as for me, I will serve the Lord, and will employ my whole time, either innocently or usefully, in serving God, and in doing good to men, who are made after the image of God. This work shall take up my whole life; there shall be no void or empty space in it; I will endeavour, as much as possibly I can, that there may be no gap or breach in it for the devil and his temptations to enter in. Lord, I will be thine; I have chosen thee for my happiness and *my portion for ever: Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. Lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: but it is good for me to draw near to God;* to begin and end my days in his fear, and to his glory.

5. and lastly, This age of our life may, for any thing we know, be the only time we may have for this purpose; and if we cast off the thoughts of God, and defer the business of religion to old age, intending, as we pretend, to set about it at that time, we may be cut off before that time comes, and *turned into hell, with the people that forget God.*

The work of religion is the most necessary of all other: and must be done one time or other, or we are certainly undone for ever. We cannot begin it too soon; but we may easily delay it too long; and then we are miserable past all recovery. He that would not venture his immortal soul, and put his everlasting happiness upon the greatest hazard and uncertainty, must make religion his first business and care, must think of God betimes, and *remember his Creator in the days of his youth.*

I have now done with the three things which I proposed to consider from these words. The inferences from this whole discourse shall be these two:

1. To persuade those that are young, to *remember* God *their Creator,* and to engage in the ways of religion and virtue betimes.

2. To urge those who have neglected this first and best

opportunity of their lives, to repent quickly, and return to a better mind, lest the opportunity be lost for ever and their case become desperate and past remedy.

1. To persuade those that are young, to *remember* God *their Creator* betimes, and to engage early in the way of religion and virtue. Do not suffer yourselves to be cheated and bewitched by sensual satisfactions, and to be destroyed by ease and prosperity. Let not a perpetual tenure of health and pleasure soften and dissolve your spirits, and banish all wise and serious thoughts out of your minds. Be not so foolish and unworthy, as to think that you have a privilege to forget God when he is most mindful of you; *when the candle of the Lord shines about your tabernacle*, and you are enjoying the health and strength, and sweetness of life.

No man knows what he does, and what an invaluable treasure he prodigally wastes, when he lets slip this golden season and opportunity of his life; whilst he is yet innocent and untainted with sin and vice, and his mind is clear of all bad impressions, and capable of the best; not enslaved to evil, and at liberty to do well.

Consider, that the ways of religion and virtue are no thing so difficult and unpleasant now, as they will be hereafter; and that the longer you forget God, and the more you are estranged from him, the more unwilling you will be to think of him, and to return to him; that your lusts will every day gain more strength, and your hearts by degrees will contract such a stiffness and hardness, that it will be no easy matter to work upon them.

Therefore *remember your Creator in the days of your youth; to day, whilst it is called to day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* When will you think of beginning a good course, if not now? You have a great work before you, which cannot be done in a little time, which cannot be begun and finished at once. Your whole life is no more than sufficient for it to do it to the best advantage, and as it ought to be done. Do not then think of crowding it into a corner of your life, much less of putting it off to the very end of it. When *that night comes, no man can work.*

Consider further, if we will deny God the hearty and vigorous service of our best days, how can we expect that

hat he will accept the faint and flattering devotions of ld age? Wise men are wont to forecast and provide ome stay and comfort for themselves against the evils nd infirmities of that time; that they may have some- hing to lean upon in their weakness, something to mi- igate and allay the troubles and afflictions of that dark nd gloomy evening; that what they cannot enjoy of resent pleasure and satisfaction, may in some measure e made up to them in comfortable reflexions upon the ast actions of a holy and innocent, an useful and well- pent life.

But, on the other hand, if we have neglected religion, nd forgotten God, days without number; if we have ived an ungodly and vitious life, we have treasured up o much guilt and remorse, so many aggravations of our orrow and anguish against an evil day; and have fool- shly contrived to make our burden then heaviest, when ve are least able to stand under it; and have provided nd laid in infinite matter for repentance, when there is ardly any space and opportunity left for the exercise of it, and when we shall be utterly disheartened from etting about so vast a work, of which we can see no nd, and yet have so very little time for it, that, if we lo any thing at all in it, we shall be forced to huddle it ip in so much haste and confusion, as will, I doubt, ignify but very little, either to our present comfort or our future happiness.

Consider this in time, all ye that forget God in the day of your prosperity, and in the best age of your life; and yet, when the day of affliction, and the infirmities of age come upon you, would be glad then to have God mindful of you, and merciful to you. But if thou wouldst not have him *cast thee off in thine old age, and forsake thee when thy strength fails*, do thou *remember him in the days of thy youth*, in the prime and vigour of thine age: *for this is the acceptable time, this is the day of salvation.*

Therefore *acquaint thyself with him, and remember him now, in the days of thy youth.* Defer not so necessary a work, no not for one moment. Begin it just now, that so thou mayest have made some good progress in it be- fore *the evil days come*: before *the sun, and the moon, and*

the ſtars be darkened, and all the comforts and joys of l
be fled and gone.

Be not deceived, O man, whoſoever thou art; *for G
is not mocked.* He will not be put off by us with *the d
in which we ourſelves have no pleaſure.* Offer up thyſ
a living ſacrifice, and not a carcaſe, if thou wouldſt
accepted. Do not provoke and affront the living Go
by offering up to him faint ſpirits, and feeble hands, a
dim eyes, and a dead heart. He hath been bountiful
us, in giving us the beſt bleſſings of life, and all thin
richly to enjoy; and do we grudge him the moſt val
able part of our lives, and the years which we ourſelv
have pleaſure in? *De we thus requite the Lord? fool
people and unwiſe!* Is the giver of all good things unwo
thy to receive from us any thing that is good? *If we
fer up the lame in ſacrifice, is it not evil? and if we
fer up the blind, is it not evil? Offer it now to thy gov
nour, and try if he will be pleaſed with thee, and accept
perſon.* Hath God deſerved ſo ill at our hands, that
ſhould forget and neglect him? and hath the devil d
ſerved ſo well of us, that we ſhould be contented to ſpe
the beſt part of our lives in his ſervice, which is perf
ſlavery? Was he our creator, or can he make us happ
nay, does he not carry on a moſt malicious deſign,
make us for ever miſerable?

2. Let me urge thoſe who have neglected this firſt a
beſt opportunity of their lives, to repent quickly, a
return to a better mind, leſt all opportunity of doing
be loſt for ever, and their caſe become deſperate and p
remedy. Reſolve to redeem, if it be poſſible, the tim
which you ſhould have improved. You have ſquander
away too much already, waſte no more of this precio
opportunity of life. You have deferred a neceſſary wo
too long, delay it no longer. Do not delude yourſelv
with vain hopes, that this work may be done at a
time, and in an inſtant; and that if you can but faſhio
your laſt breath into, *Lord have mercy upon me*, this wi
prevail with God, and make atonement for the lon
courſe of a wicked and ſinful life. What ſtrange though
have men of God and heaven, what extravagant con
ceits of the little evil of ſin, and the great eaſineſs of r
pentance, that can impoſe upon themſelves at this rate

Bethin

Bethink yourſelves better in time; *conſider, and ſhew yourſelves men.* What will you do in the day of your diſtreſs, who have neglected God in your moſt flouriſhing and proſperous condition? what will you ſay to him in a dying hour, who ſcarce ever had one ſerious thought of him all your life? Can you have the face at that time to beſpeak him in this manner: "Lord, now the world "and my luſts have left me, and I feel myſelf ready to "ſink into eternal perdition, I lay hold upon thy mer- "cy, to deliver my ſoul from going down into the pit. "I have heard ſtrange things of thy goodneſs, and that "thou art merciful even to a miracle. This is that which "I always truſted to, that, after a long life of ſin and va- "nity, thou wouldſt at laſt be pacified with a few pe- "nitent words and ſighs at the hour of death. Let me "not, I pray thee, be diſappointed of this hope, and "put to confuſion?"

Is this an addreſs fit to be made to a wiſe man, much leſs to the all-wiſe and juſt judge of the world? And yet this ſeems to be the plain interpretation of the late and forced application of a great and habitual ſinner to almighty God in his laſt extremity, and when he is juſt giving up the ghoſt, and going to appear before his dreadful tribunal.

I ſay again, let no man deceive you with vain words, or with vain hopes, or with falſe notions of a ſlight and ſudden repentance; as if heaven were an hoſpital, founded on purpoſe to receive all ſick and maimed perſons; that when they can live no longer to the luſts of the fleſh, and the ſinful pleaſures of this world, can but put up a cold and formal petition, to be admitted there.

No, no; as ſure as God is true, they ſhall never ſee the kingdom of God, who, inſtead of ſeeking it in the firſt place, make it their laſt refuge and retreat; and, when they find themſelves under the ſentence of death and damnation, only to avoid preſent execution, and ſince there is no other remedy, do at laſt bethink themſelves of getting to heaven, and fall upon their knees to petition the great judge of the world, that they may be tranſported thither.

Can any man in reaſon expect that ſuch a petition will be granted? I tell you nay; but except you repent ſooner,

er, and at a fitter time, and after a better fashion, you shall certainly perish. As much as God desires the salvation of men, he will not prostitute heaven, and set the gates of it wide open to those who only fly to it in extremity, but never sought it in good earnest, nor indeed do now care for it or desire it for any other reason, but to excuse them from going to hell. They have no value for heaven, because they are in no ways fit for it; but yet they think hell to be the worse place of the two.

The ever blessed God is himself abundantly sufficient for his own happiness, and does not need our company to make any addition to it, nor yet is heaven so desolate a place, or so utterly void of inhabitants, that, like some newly discovered plantation, it should be glad to receive the most vile and profligate persons, the scum and refuse of mankind. There are an innumerable company of glorious angels, much nobler creatures than the best of men, to people those blessed regions. *Thousands of thousands* continually *stand before God, and ten thousand times ten thousand minister unto him.*

We do absolutely stand in need of God to make us happy; but he hath no need of us to help him to be so. God indeed is so good, as to desire our happiness as earnestly as if it were necessary to his own; but he is happy in and from himself; and without him it is impossible we should be happy; nay, we must of necessity be for ever miserable.

To conclude: If we would have God to accept us in a dying hour, and our blessed Saviour to *remember us*, now *he is in his kingdom*, let us think of him betimes, and *acquaint ourselves with him, that we may be at peace, now*, before *the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, when thou shall say, we have no pleasure in them.*

O that men were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end! Which God of his infinite goodness grant that we may all seriously lay to heart, *in this our day*; and may *learn* betimes *so to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom*; for his mercies sake in Jesus Christ. To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and for ever. *Amen.*

The

The RULE of FAITH:

OR,

An ANSWER to the treatise of Mr. *I. S.* intitled, *Sure footing*, &c.

To my honoured and learned friend Dr. STILLINGFLEET.

SIR,

I Have, with a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction, read over your book, which I find in every part answerable to its title, viz. A rational account of the grounds of the Protestant religion. *And now I thank you for it, not only as a private favour, but a public benefit. No sooner had I perused it, but I met with a discourse, intituled,* Sure footing in Christianity. *And although I have no small prejudice against books with conceited titles, yet I was tempted to look into this, because it pretended to contain animadversions on some passages in your book which I had so lately read over. Upon perusal of which animadversions, I found, that the author of them had attacked (and in his own opinion confuted) a page or two in your book. This drew me on to take a view of his main discourses; which, because they are in great vogue among some of his own party, and do, with an unusual kind of confidence and ostentation, pretend to the newest and most exact fashion of writing controversy, as being all along demonstrative, and built upon self evident principles; therefore I resolved thoroughly to examine them, that I might discover, if I could, upon what so firm and solid foundations this high and mighty confidence was built.*

But, before I had entered upon this undertaking, I met with a letter from the author of Sure footing *to his answerer, directing him how he ought to demean himself in his answer. In which letter, though there be many things liable to great exception; yet, because I am unwilling to be diverted from the main question, I shall not argue with him about*

about any of those matters; only take leave to use the same liberty in managing my answer, which he hath assumed to himself in prescribing laws to me about it: therefore, without taking any further notice of his letter, I address myself to his book.

PART I.

The explication and state of the question.

SECT. I. *The explication of the terms of the question.*

§ 1. THE question he propounds to himself to debate, is, "What is the rule of faith?" In order to the resolution whereof, he endeavours,

First, To fix the true notion of these two terms, *rule*, and *faith*: which way of proceeding I cannot but allow to be very proper and reasonable; but I can by no means think his explication of those terms to be sufficient. He tells us, that "a rule is that which is able to regulate "or guide him that useth it." In which description, as in many other passages of his book, he is plainly guilty of that which he taxeth in Mr. Whitby, *p.* 180; that is, the confounding of *a rule* and *a guide*, by making *regulating* and *guiding* to be equivalent words. But for this I am no further concerned, than to take notice of it by the way. The fault which I find in this definition, is, that it doth not make the thing plainer than it was before; so that no man is the wiser for it, nor one jot nearer knowing what a rule is. He pretends to tell Englishmen what a rule is; and, for their clearer understanding of this word, he explains it by a word less removed from the Latin, "A rule is that which is able "to regulate him that useth it:" just as if a man should go about to explain what a lawgiver is, by saying, "He "is one that hath the power of legislation." Of the two he had much better have said, that "a rule is a "thing

'thing that is able to rule him that uſeth it;" though this be nothing but an explication of the ſame word by itſelf.

§ 2. Not much better is his explication of the term *faith*, which he tells us, "in the common ſenſe of mankind is the ſame with believing." He declared indeed beforehand, *p.* 4. that he did not "intend to give 'rigorous ſchool-definitions of either this or the former 'word;" and, to do him right, he hath not in the leaſt ſwerved from his intention. It were to be wiſhed he had prefaced ſome ſuch thing to his demonſtrations; for the reader will find, that they are not a whit more rigorous than his definitions: the latter of which doth very much reſemble the country-man's way of defining, who, being asked by his neighbour what an invaſion was, after ſome ſtudy, told him very gravely, that "an invaſion was as 'if he ſhould ſay an invaſion." In like manner Mr. S. tells, that "faith (or, which is all one, belief,) is the "ſame with believing;" which, in my apprehenſion, is but a country-definition, unleſs the interpoſing of thoſe ſolemn words, "in the common ſenſe of mankind," may be thought to mend the matter. This puts me in mind of what Mr. S. ſays in his tranſition, (as he calls it,) where he gives the reader an account what feats he hath done in his book: "He will ſee, (ſays he, *p.* 159.) 'I take my riſe at the meaning of the words *rule* and "*faith*; this known, I eſtabliſh my firſt principles in "this preſent matter to be theſe, *viz.* A rule is a rule; "Faith is faith." This is the right ſelf-evident method he talks ſo much of, and his principles agree admirably well with his definitions. If he had but proceeded in the ſame method, and added, That a rule of faith is a rule of faith; that oral tradition is oral tradition; and, That to ſay oral tradition is the rule of faith, is as much as to ſay, oral tradition is the rule of faith, the whole buſineſs had been concluded without any more ado; and I think no body would have gone about to confute him.

§ 3. Rejecting then his way of definition, as inept and frivolous, and no ways tending to give a man a clearer notion of things; I ſhall endeavour to explain a little better, if I can, the meaning of theſe terms.

A *rule* (when we ſpeak of a rule of faith) is a metaphorical word, which, in its firſt and proper ſenſe, being applied to material and ſenſible things, is the meaſure according to which we judge of the ſtraightneſs and crookedneſs of things; and from hence it is transferred by analogy to things moral or intellectual. A moral rule is the meaſure according to which we judge whether a thing be good or evil; and this kind of rule is that which is commonly called *a law*; and the agreement or diſagreement of our actions to this rule, is, ſuitably to the metaphor, called *rectitude* or *obliquity*. An intellectual rule is the meaſure according to which we judge whether a thing be true or falſe. And this is either general or more particular. Common notions, and the acknowledged principles of reaſon, are that general rule according to which we judge whether a thing be true or falſe. The particular principles of every ſcience are the more particular rules according to which we judge whether things in that ſcience be true or falſe. So that the general notion of a rule is, that it is "a meaſure, by the "agreement or diſagreement to which we judge of all "things of that kind to which it belongs."

§ 4. *Faith*, though both among ſacred and profane writers it be uſed many times more generally, for a perſuaſion or aſſent of the mind to any thing wrought in us by any kind of argument; yet, as it is a term of art uſed by divines, it ſignifies that particular kind of aſſent which is wrought in us by teſtimony or authority: ſo that divine faith, which we are now ſpeaking of, is an aſſent to a thing upon the teſtimony or authority of God; or, which is all one, "an aſſent to a truth upon divine "revelation."

§ 5. A *rule of faith* is the meaſure according to which we judge what matters we are to aſſent to, as revealed to us by God, and what not. And, more particularly, the rule of Chriſtian faith is the meaſure according to which we are to judge what we ought to aſſent to, as the doctrine revealed by Chriſt to the world, and what not.

§ 6. So that this queſtion, "What is the rule of Chri-"ſtian faith?" ſuppoſeth a doctrine revealed by Chriſt to the world; and that that doctrine was intelligibly and entirely delivered by Chriſt to his Apoſtles, and ſufficient

it confirmation given to it; that this doctrine was in ie ſame manner publiſhed to the world by the Apoſtles, ho likeways gave ſufficient evidence of the truth of it. ll this is neceſſarily ſuppoſed in the queſtion: for it ould be vain to inquire, whether this or that be the ile of Chriſtian faith, if ſuch a thing as the Chriſtian .ith were not firſt ſuppoſed. When therefore we inuire, what is the rule of Chriſtian faith? the meaning f that inquiry is, by what way and means the knowdge of Chriſt's doctrine is conveyed certainly down to s, who live at the diſtance of ſo many ages from the time f its firſt delivery? for this being known, we have the ile of faith; that is, a meaſure by which we may judge vhat we are to aſſent to as the doctrine of Chriſt, and vhat not. So that, when any queſtion ariſeth about any articular propoſition, whether this be part of Chriſt's octrine, we may be able by this rule to reſolve it.

Sect. II. *Mr. S.'s rule of faith.*

1. THE next thing to be conſidered is, his reſolution of this queſtion; by which we ſhall now what his opinion is concerning the rule of faith; or that being known, the controverſy between us will aſily be ſtated.

His opinion in general is, that oral or practical tradition, in oppoſition to writing, or any other way that can e aſſigned, is the rule of faith. By oral or practical radition, he means, *p.* 41. "a delivery down from hand "to hand, by words, and a conſtant courſe of frequent "and viſible actions, conformable to thoſe words, of the "ſenſe and faith of forefathers."

§ 2. Now, that I may bring the controverſy between us to a clear ſtate, I am firſt to take a more particular view of his opinion concerning the rule of faith, that ſo I may the better underſtand how much he attributes to oral tradition, and what to the Scriptures, or written tradition: and then I am to lay down the Proteſtant rule of faith, that ſo it may appear how far we agree, and how far we differ. The ſum of what he attributes to oral tradition, ſo far as can be collected out of ſo obſcure

and confused a discourse, may be reduced to these fi heads.

§ 3. 1*st*, That the doctrine of Christian religion w delivered by Christ to the Apostles, and by them publis ed to the world; and that the age which first receiv it from the Apostles delivered it as they received without any change or corruption, to their children, a they to theirs, and so it went on solely by this way of ral tradition. This is the sum of his explication of tr dition, *disc.* 5.

§ 4. 2*dly*, That this way alone is not only sufficient convey this doctrine down to all ages certainly, a without any alteration; but it is the only possible w that can be imagined, of conveying down a doctrine curely from one age to another. And this is the nat ral result of his discourse about the properties of a r of faith; for if the true properties of a rule of faith belong to oral tradition, then it is a sufficient mea and if those properties do solely and essentially appert to it, and are incompatible to any thing else, as he e deavours to prove, then it is impossible there should any other way.

§ 5. 3*dly*, That it is impossible this means should fa or miss of its end; that is, the doctrine of Christ bei once put into this way of conveyance, it can neither ce to descend, nor be at any time corrupted or changed its descent. This is that which his demonstrations p tend to prove.

§ 6. 4*thly*, That the infallibility of oral tradition, the impossibility of its failing, is a full and self-evide principle. This he frequently asserts throughout book.

§ 7. 5*thly*, That this way of oral tradition hath *de f to* in all ages been acknowledged by Christians, as t only way and means whereby the doctrine of Christia ty hath been conveyed down to them. And this is th which he attempts to prove from the consent of auth rity.

§ 8. As for the scriptures, he grants them indeed have been written by men divinely inspired, and to co tain a divine doctrine, even the same which is deliver by oral tradition. So he tells us, *p.* 117. "It is c "ta

tain the Apoſtles taught the ſame doctrine they writ." ut then he denies it to be of any uſe without oral tradition, becauſe neither the letter nor ſenſe of it can without that be aſcertained. So he ſaith in his letter to Dr. auſabon, *p.* 337. " As for the ſcriptures, (aſcertaining their letter and ſenſe, which is done by tradition,) it is clear they are of incomparable value, not only for the divine doctrine contained in them; but alſo for many particular paſſages, whoſe ſource or firſt atteſtation not being univerſal, nor their nature much practical, might poſſibly have been loſt in their conveyance ' down by tradition." Where, though he gives the criptures very good words, it is to be underſtood, proided they will be ſubordinate, and acknowledge that hey owe their ſenſe, and their being intelligible and ıſeful, to oral tradition: for if any man ſhall preſume o ſay, that this book hath any certain ſenſe without ral tradition, or that God can write plainly and intelligibly, and that this book which he hath indited is ſo written, and doth not depend upon tradition for its ſenſe nd interpretation; then the moſt ſcurrilous language is ıot bad enough for the ſcriptures: then what are thoſe acred writings, but " ink variouſly figured in a book?" (*Append.* 5. *p.* 319.) " unſenſed characters, waxen-na- ' tured words, not yet ſenſed, nor having any certain ' interpreter, but fit to be played upon diverſely by ' quirks of wit; that is, apt to blunder and confound, ' but to clear little or nothing?" (*Ibid. p.* 68.) Theſe, with many other diſgraceful terms, he very liberally beſtows upon the divine oracles: the conſideration whereof, did it not miniſter too much horror, would afford ſome comfort; for by this kind of rude uſage, ſo familiar with him towards his adverſaries, one may reaſonably conjecture, that he doth not reckon the ſcriptures among his friends.

§ 9. And whereas he ſaith, that " the ſcriptures have " preſerved many particular paſſages, which, becauſe " their ſource or firſt atteſtation was not univerſal, nor " their nature much practical, might poſſibly have been " loſt in their conveyance down by tradition;" this is impoſſible, according to his hypotheſis: for if neither the ſcripture's letter, nor the certain ſenſe of it, as to

the main body of Christian doctrine, could have bee
secured without oral tradition; that is, if we could n
have known, that those passages which contain the mai
points of Christ's doctrine, either had been written b
men divinely inspired, or what the sense of them wa
but from the consonancy and agreement of those passa
ges with the doctrine which was orally preached by th
Apostles: how can we be certain either of the letter
sense of other particular passages, which must necessaril
want this confirmation from oral tradition; becau
" their first attestation was not universal, nor their n
" ture much practical?" Nay, his discourse plainly im
plies, that we can have no security at all, either of th
letter or sense of any other parts of scripture, but onl
those which are coincident with the main body of Chr
stian doctrine; as is evident from these words, *p.* 11
" Tradition established, the church is provided of a ce
" tain and infallible rule to preserve a copy of the scri
" ture's letter, truly significative of Christ's sense, as f
" as it is coincident with the main body of Christia
" doctrine preached at first; because sense writ in me
" hearts by tradition, can easily guide them to corre
" the alteration of the outward letter." This I perceiv
plainly is the thing they would be at: they would co
rect the outward letter of scripture by sense written i
their hearts; and then, instead of leaving out the secon
commandment, they would change it into a precept
giving due worship to images, according to the counc
of Trent; and a thousand other alterations they mu
make in the Bible, to make it truly significative of th
sense of their church. But surely the outward letter
other passages of scripture, which were not intended t
signify points of faith, is equally liable to alterations
and yet the church is not by tradition provided of an
way to correct these alterations when they happen; be
cause tradition doth, as this corollary implies, only furnis
the church with a certain and infallible rule of preserv
ing a copy of the scripture's letter, so far as it is coinci
dent with the main body of Christian doctrine.

§ 10. Again, he tells us, *p.* 117. " Tradition esta
" blished, the church is provided of a certain and infal
" lible rule to interpret scripture-letter by, so as to ar

" riv

rive certainly at Christ's sense, as far as the letter concerns the body of Christian doctrine preached at first, or points requisite to salvation." So that whatever he may attribute to scripture for fashion's sake, and to avoid calumny with the vulgar, as he says very ingeniously in his explication of the 15th corollary; nevertheless it is plain, that, according to his own hypothesis, he cannot but look upon it as perfectly useless and pernicious. That it is altogether useless according to this hypothesis, is plain; for the main body of Christian doctrine is securely conveyed to us without it; and it can give no kind of confirmation to it, because it receives all its confirmation from it; only the church is ever and anon put to a great deal of trouble to correct the alteration of the outward letter, by tradition, and sense written in their hearts. And as for all other parts of scripture, which are not coincident with the main body of Christian doctrine, we can have no certainty, either that the outward letter is true, nor, if we could, can we possibly arrive at any certain sense of them. And that it is intolerably pernicious according to his hypothesis, is plain; because "every silly and upstart heresy fathers "itself upon it," *p.* 40. and when men leave tradition, as he supposeth all heretics do, the scripture is the most dangerous engine that could have been invented; being to such persons only "waxen-natured words, not sens-"ed, nor having any certain interpreter; but fit to be "played upon diversely by quirks of wit; that is, apt "to blunder and confound, but to clear little or nothing." *p.* 68. And indeed, if his hypothesis were true, the scriptures might well deserve all the contemptuous language which he useth against them; and Mr. White's comparison of them with Lilly's almanack, (*Apology for tradition, p.* 165.) would not only be pardonable, but proper; and, unless he added it out of prudence, and for the people's sake, whom he may think too superstitiously conceited of those books, he might have spared that cold excuse which he makes for using this similitude, that "it "was agreeable rather to the impertinency of the ob-"jection, than the dignity of the subject." Certain it is, if these men are true to their own principles, that notwithstanding the high reverence and esteem pretended to

be borne by them and their church to the ſcriptures, the
muſt heartily deſpiſe them, and wiſh them out of th
way; and even look upon it as a great overſight of th
divine providence, to trouble his church with a book
which, if their diſcourſe be of any conſequence, can ſtan
Catholics in no ſtead at all, and is ſo dangerous an
miſchievous a weapon in the hands of heretics.

SECT. III. *The Proteſtant doctrine concerning the rule o faith.*

§ 1. HAving thus taken a view of his opinion, an
conſidered how much he attributes to oral tra
dition, and how little to the ſcriptures; before I aſſai
his hypotheſis, I ſhall lay down the Proteſtant rule c
faith; not that ſo much is neceſſary for the anſwering c
his book, but that he may have no colour of objection
that I proceed altogether in the deſtructive way, and o
verthrow his principle, as he calls it, without ſubſtitutin
another in its room. The opinion then of the Proteſtant
concerning the rule of faith, is this in general, That thoſ
books which we call the *holy ſcriptures*, are the mean
whereby the Chriſtian doctrine hath been brought dow
to us. And that he may now clearly underſtand this
together with the grounds of it, which in reaſon he ough
to have done before he had forſaken us, I ſhall declar
it more particularly in theſe following propoſitions.

§ 2. *1ſt*, That the doctrine of Chriſtian religion wa
by Chriſt delivered to the Apoſtles, and by them firſ
preached to the world, and afterwards by them commit-
ted to writing; which writings, or books, have been
tranſmitted from one age to another down to us. So far
I take to be granted by our preſent adverſaries. That
the Chriſtian doctrine was by Chriſt delivered to the A-
poſtles, and by them publiſhed to the world, is part of
their own hypotheſis. That this doctrine was afterwards
by the Apoſtles committed to writing, he alſo grants,
corol. 29. *p.* 117. "It is certain the Apoſtles taught the
"ſame doctrine they writ;" and if ſo, it muſt be as cer-
tain, that they writ the ſame doctrine which they taught.
I know it is the general tenet of the Papiſts, that the
Scriptures do not contain the entire body of Chriſtian
doctrine;

doctrine; but that besides the doctrines contained in scripture, there are also others brought down to us by oral or unwritten tradition. But Mr. S. who supposeth the whole doctrine of Christian religion to be certainly conveyed down to us solely by oral tradition, doth not any where, that I remember, deny that all the same doctrine is contained in the scriptures; only he denies the scriptures to be a means sufficient to convey this doctrine to us with certainty, so that we can by them be infallibly assured what is Christ's doctrine, and what not. Nay, he seems in that passage I last cited, to grant this, in saying, that the Apostles did both teach and write the same doctrine. I am sure Mr. White, whom he follows very closely throughout his whole book, does not deny this in his *Apology for Tradition*, where he saith, *p.* 171. that "it is not the Catholic position, That all its doctrines "are not contained in the scriptures." And that those writings or books which we call *the holy scriptures*, have been transmitted down to us, is unquestionable matter of fact, and granted universally by the Papists, as to all those books which are owned by Protestants for canonical.

§ 3. *2dly*, That the way of writing is a sufficient means to convey a doctrine to the knowledge of those who live in times very remote from the age of its first delivery. According to his hypothesis, there is no possible way of conveying a doctrine with certainty and security besides that of oral tradition: the falsehood of which will sufficiently appear, when I shall have shewn, that the true properties of a rule of faith do agree to the scriptures, and not to oral tradition. In the mean time, I shall only offer this to his consideration, that whatever can be orally delivered in plain and intelligible words, may be written in the same words; and that a writing or book which is public, and in every one's hand, may be conveyed down with at least as much certainty and security, and with as little danger of alteration, as an oral tradition: and if so, I understand not what can render it impossible for a book to convey down a doctrine to the knowledge of after ages. Besides, if he had looked well about him, he could not but have apprehended some little inconvenience in making that an essential

ſential part of his hypotheſis, which is contradicted by plain and conſtant experience: for that any kind of doctrine may be ſufficiently conveyed by books to the knowledge of after ages, provided thoſe books be but written intelligibly, and preſerved from change and corruption in the conveyance, (both which I ſhall be ſo bold as to ſuppoſe poſſible) is as little doubted by the generality of mankind, as that there are books. And, ſurely we Chriſtians cannot think it impoſſible to convey a doctrine to poſterity by books, when we conſider that God himſelf pitched upon this way for conveyance of the doctrine of the Jewiſh religion to after ages: becauſe it is not likely, that ſo wiſe an agent ſhould pitch upon a means whereby it was impoſſible he ſhould attain his end.

§ 4. *3dly*, That the books of ſcripture are ſufficiently plain as to all things neceſſary to be believed and practiſed. He that denies this, ought in reaſon to inſtance in ſome neceſſary point of faith, or matter of practice, which is not in ſome place of ſcripture or other plainly delivered. For it is not a ſufficient objection to ſay, *p.* 38. 39. That the greateſt wits among the Proteſtants differ about the ſenſe of thoſe texts, wherein the generality of them ſuppoſe the divinity of Chriſt to be plainly and clearly expreſſed: becauſe, if nothing were to be accounted ſufficiently plain, but what it is impoſſible a great wit ſhould be able to wreſt to any other ſenſe, not only the ſcriptures, but all other books, and, which is worſt of all to him that makes this objection, all oral tradition would fall into uncertainty. Doth the traditionary church pretend, that the doctrine of Chriſt's divinity is conveyed down to her by oral tradition more plainly than it is expreſſed in ſcripture? I would fain know what plainer words ſhe ever uſed to expreſs this point of faith by, than what the ſcripture uſeth; which expreſsly calls him *God, the true God, God over all bleſſed for evermore.* If it be ſaid, That theſe who deny the divinity of Chriſt have been able to evade theſe and all other texts of ſcripture, but they could never elude the definitions of the church in that matter; it is eaſily anſwered, That the ſame arts would equally have eluded both: but there was no reaſon why they ſhould trouble them-

themſelves ſo much about the latter; for why ſhould they be ſolicitous to wreſt the definitions of councils, and conform them to their own opinion, who had no regard to the church's authority? If thoſe great wits, as he calls them, had believed the ſayings of ſcripture to be of no greater authority than the definitions of councils, they would have anſwered texts of ſcripture as they have done the definitions of councils; not by endeavouring to interpret them to another ſenſe, but by downright denying their authority. So that it ſeems that oral tradition is liable to the ſame inconvenience with the written as to this particular.

§ 5. And of this I ſhall give him a plain inſtance in two great wits of their church, the preſent Pope and Mr. White, the one, the head of the traditionary church, as Mr. S. calls it; the other, the great maſter of the traditionary doctrine. Theſe two great wits, the Pope and Mr. White, notwithſtanding the plainneſs of oral tradition, and the impoſſibility of being ignorant of it, or miſtaking it, have yet been ſo unhappy as to differ about ſeveral points of faith; inſomuch that Mr. White is unkindly cenſured for it at Rome; and perhaps here, in England, the Pope ſpeeds no better. However, the difference continues ſtill ſo wide, that Mr. White hath thought fit to diſobey the ſummons of his chief paſtor; and, like a prudent man, rather to write againſt him here, out of harm's way, than to venture the infallibility of plain oral tradition for the doctrines he maintains, againſt a practical tradition which they have at Rome, of killing heretics.

Methinks Mr. S. might have ſpared his brags, *p.* 54. that he "hath evinced from clear reaſon, that it is far "more poſſible to make a man not to be, than not "to know what is rivetted into his ſoul by ſo oft re- "peated ſenſations, (as the Chriſtian faith is by oral "and practical tradition); and that it exceeds all the "power of nature, abſtracting from the caſes of mad- "neſs and violent diſeaſe, to blot knowledge, thus fix- "ed, out of the ſoul of one ſingle believer; inſomuch "that ſooner may all mankind periſh, than the regula- "tive virtue of tradition miſcarry; nay, ſooner may "the ſinews of entire nature, by overſtraining, crack,

"and

" and she lose all her activity and motion, that is, her-
" self, then one single part of that innumerable mul-
" titude which integrate the vast testification which we
" call tradition, can possibly be violated;" when after he hath told us, *p.* 116. that " the city of Rome was
" blessed with more vigorous causes to imprint Christ's
" doctrine at first, and recommend it to the next age,
" than were found any where else; and consequently,
" that the stream of tradition, in its source and first
" putting into motion, was more particularly vigorous
" there than in any other see; and that the chief pastor
" of that see hath a particular title to infallibility, built
" upon tradition, above any other pastor whatsoever:
" not to dilate on the particular assistances of that Bi-
" shop, springing out of his divinely constituted office:" when, I say, after all this quaint reasoning and rumbling rhetoric, about the infallibility of oral tradition, and the particular infallibility of the Bishop of Rome, built on tradition, we cannot but remember, that this great oracle of oral tradition, the Pope, and this great master of it, Mr. White, who is so peculiarly skilled in the rule of faith, have so manifestly declared themselves to differ in points of faith. For that the Pope, and his congregation general at Rome, have condemned all his books, for this reason, because " they contain several
" propositions manifestly heretical," (*Mr. Wh. exetasis*, *p.* 9.), is a sign, that these two great wits do not very well hit it in matters of faith; and either that they do both agree in the same rule of faith, or that one of them does not rightly understand it, or not follow it. And now, why may not that which Mr. S. unjustly says concerning the use of scripture, *p.* 39. be upon this account justly applied to the business of oral tradition? " If
" we see two such eminent wits among the Papists,
" (the Pope and Mr. White), making use of the self-
" same, and, as they conceive, the best advantages
" their rule of faith gives them, and availing themselves
" the best they can, by acquired skill, yet differ about
" matters of faith; what certainty can we undertakingly
" promise to weaker heads, that is, to the generality of
" the Papists," in whom the governors of the church

do

do professedly cherish ignorance for the increasing of their devotion?

§ 6. 4*thly*, We have sufficient assurance that the books of scripture are conveyed down to us without any material corruption or alteration. And he that denies this, must either reject the authority of all books, because we cannot be certain whether they be the same now that they were at first: or else give some probable reason why these should be more liable to corruption than others. But any man that considers things, will easily find, that it is much more improbable that these books should have been either wilfully or involuntarily corrupted in any thing material to faith or a good life, than any other books in the world, whether we consider the peculiar providence of God engaged for the preservation of them, or the peculiar circumstances of these books. If they were written by men divinely inspired, and are of use to Christians, as is acknowledged, at least in words, on all hands; nothing is more credible, than that the same divine providence which took care for the publishing of them, would likewise be concerned to preserve them entire. And if we consider the peculiar circumstances of these books, we shall find it morally impossible that they should have been materially corrupted; because, being of universal and mighty concernment, and at first diffused into many hands, and soon after translated into most languages, and most passages in them cited in books now extant, and all these now agreeing in all matters of importance, we have as great assurance as can be had concerning any thing of this nature, that they have not suffered any material alteration; and far greater than any man can have concerning the incorruption of their oral tradition; as I shall shew when I come to answer the thing which he calls demonstration.

§ 7. 5*thly*, That *de facto* the Scripture hath been acknowledged by all Christians, in former ages, to be the means whereby the doctrine of Christ hath, with greatest certainty, been conveyed to them. One good evidence of this is, that the primitive adversaries of christian religion did always look upon the Scripture as the standard and measure of the christian doctrine; and, in all their writings against Christianity, took that for granted to be the

the christian faith which was contained in those books there having not as yet any philosopher risen up, who had demonstrated to the world, that a doctrine could not with sufficient certainty and clearness, be conveyed by writing from one age to another. But how absurd had this method of confuting christian religion been, if it had been then the public profession of Christians, that the Scriptures were not the rule of their faith? How easy had it been for the fathers, who apologized for and defended christian religion, to have told them, they took a wrong measure of their doctrine? for it was not the principle of Christians, that their faith was conveyed to them by the Scriptures, and therefore it was a fond undertaking to attack their religion that way; but if they would effectually argue against it, they ought to inquire what that doctrine was which was orally delivered from father to son, without which the Scriptures could signify no more to them than an unknown cypher without a key being of themselves, without the light of oral tradition only a heap of unintelligible words, "unsensed characters," and "ink variously figured in a book;" and therefore it was a gross mistake in them to think they could understand the christian religion, like their own philosophy, by reading of those books, or confute it by confuting them. Thus the fathers might have defended their religion; nay, they ought in all reason to have taken this course, and to have appealed from those dead senseless books, to the "true rule of faith, the living "voice of the church essential." But doth Mr. S. find any thing to this purpose in the apologies of the fathers? If he hath discovered any such matter, he might do well to acquaint the world with it, and make them wiser. In the mean time, I shall inform him what I have found, that the fathers never except against that method, but appeal frequently from the slanderous reports and misrepresentations which were made of their doctrine, to the books of Scripture, as the true standard of it.

§ 8. Another evidence that Christians, in all ages since the Apostles times, have owned the Scriptures for the rule of their faith, is, that the fathers, in their homilies, did use constantly to declare to the people what they were to believe, and what they were to practise, out of

f the scriptures; which had been most absurd and senseless, had they believed, not the scriptures, but something lse, to have been the rule of faith and manners. For /hat could tend more to the seducing of the people from Mr. S.'s supposed rule of faith, oral tradition, than to nake a daily practice of declaring and confirming the octrines of the Christian faith from the scriptures? Had the ancient fathers been right for Mr. S's way, they would not have built their doctrine upon scripture, perhaps not have mentioned it, for fear of giving the people an occasion to grow familiar with so dangerous a book; but rather, as their more prudent posterity have done, would have locked it up from the people in an unknown tongue, and have set open the stores of good wholsome traditions; and, instead of telling them, as they do most frequently, "Thus saith the scripture," would only have told them, "This is the voice of the 'essential church; thus it hath been delivered down by 'hand to us from our forefathers."

§ 9. I might add for a third evidence, the great malice of the enemies and persecutors of Christianity against his book, and their cruel endeavours to extort it out of the hands of Christians, and destroy it out of the world, that by this means they might extirpate Christianity: for it seems they thought that the abolishing of this book would have been the ruin of that religion. But according to Mr. S's opinion, their malice wanted wit: for, had all the Bibles in the world been burnt, Christian religion would nevertheless have been entirely preserved, and safely transmitted down to us by sense written in men's hearts, with the good help of Mr. S's demonstrations. Nay, their church would have been a great gainer by it: for this occasion and parent of all heresy, the scripture, being once out of the way, she might have had all in her own hands; and, by leading the people in the safe paths of tradition, and consequently of science, might have made them wise enough to obey. Well; but suppose the persecutors of Christianity mistook themselves in their design, how came the Christians in those days to be so tenacious of this book, that rather than deliver it, they would yield up themselves to torments and death? And why did they look upon those

who out of fear delivered up their books, as apoſtate and renouncers of Chriſtianity? And if they had n thought this book to be the great inſtrument of the faith and ſalvation; and if it had really been of no grea er conſideration than Mr. W. and Mr. S. would make i why ſhould they be ſo loth to part with a few "unſe "ſed characters, waxen-natured words, to be playe "upon diverſely by quirks of wit; that is, apt to blu "der and confound, but to clear little or nothing? why ſhould they value their lives at ſo cheap a rate, to throw them away for a few inſignificant ſcrawls, an to ſhed their blood for "a little ink variouſly figured i "a book?" Did they not know, that the ſafety of Chr ſtianity did not depend upon this book? Did no Chr ſtian then underſtand that, which, according to Mr. S, n Chriſtian can be ignorant of, *viz.* that not the ſcriptur but unmiſtakeable and indefectible oral tradition was th rule of faith? Why did they not conſider, that thoug this letter-rule of hereticks had been conſumed to aſhe yet their faith would have lain ſafe, and "been preſerve "entire in its ſpiritual cauſes, mens minds, the noble "pieces in nature?" *p.* 34. Some of them indeed did de liver up their books, and were called *traditores*; and have ſome ground to believe, that theſe were the only tra ditionary Chriſtians of that time, and that the reſt wer confeſſors and martyrs for the letter-rule. And if thi be not evidence enough, that the ſcriptures have alway been acknowledged by Chriſtians for the rule of faith, ſhall, when I come to examine his teſtimonies for tradi tion, (with the good leave of his diſtinction between *ſpe culators* and *teſtifiers*), prove, by moſt expreſs teſtimony that it was the general opinion of the fathers, that "th "ſcriptures are the rule of Chriſtian faith;" and then if his demonſtration of the infallibility of tradition wil inforce, that as teſtifiers they muſt needs have ſpoken o therwiſe, who can help it?

SECT. IV. *How much Proteſtants allow to oral tradition.*

§ 1. HAving thus laid down the Proteſtant rule of faith, with the grounds of it, all that now remains

mains for me to do towards the clear and full ſtating f the controverſy between us, is, to take notice briefly, nd with due limitations,

1. How much the Proteſtants do allow to oral tradi- on.

2. What thoſe things are, which Mr. S. thinks fit to ttribute to his rule of faith, which we ſee no cauſe to ttribute to ours; and when this is done, any one may afily diſcern how far we differ.

§ 2. *Firſt*, How much Proteſtants do allow to oral radition.

1*ſt*, We grant that oral tradition, in ſome circum- tances, may be a ſufficient way of conveying a doctrine; ut withal we deny, that ſuch circumſtances are now in eing. In the firſt ages of the world, when the *creden- da* or articles of religion, and the *agenda* or precepts of t, were but few, and ſuch as had the evidence of natural ight; when the world was contracted into a few families n compariſon, and the age of man ordinarily extended o ſix or ſeven hundred years; it is eaſy to imagine how uch a doctrine, in ſuch circumſtances, might have been ropagated by oral tradition, without any great change r alterations. Adam lived till Methuſelah was above two undred years old, Methuſelah lived till Sem was near n hundred, and Sem outlived Abraham: ſo that this radition need not paſs through more than two hands betwixt Adam and Abraham. But though this way was ſufficient to have preſerved religion in the world, if men had not been wanting to themſelves; yet we find it did not prove effectual: for through the corruption and ne- gligence of men after the flood, (if not before), when the world began to multiply, and the age of man was ſhortened, the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God was generally loſt in the word. And ſo far as ap- pears by ſcripture hiſtory, the only record we have of thoſe times, when God called out Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees, the whole world was lapſed into poly- theiſm and idolatry. Therefore, for the greater ſecuri- ty of religion afterwards, when the poſterity of Abra- ham was multiplied into a great nation, the wiſdom of God did not think fit to intruſt the doctrine of religion any longer to the fallible and uncertain way of traditi-

on, but committed it to writing. Now, that God pitched upon this way, after the world had sadly experienced the unsuccessfulness of the other, seems to be a very good evidence, that this was the better and more secure way; it being the usual method of divine dispensations, not to go backwards, but to move towards perfection, and to proceed from that which is less perfect to that which is more. And the Apostle's reasoning concerning the two covenants, is very applicable to these two methods of conveying the doctrine of religion: *If the first had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second*, Heb. viii. 7.

§ 3. So likewise, when Christ revealed his doctrine to the world, it was not in his lifetime committed to writing; because it was entertained but by a few, who were his disciples and followers, and who, so long as he continued with them, had a living oracle to teach them. After his death, the Apostles, who were to publish this doctrine to the world, were assisted by an infallible spirit, so as they were secured from error and mistake in the delivery of it. But when this extraordinary assistance failed, there was need of some other means to convey it to posterity, that so it might be a fixed and standing rule of faith and manners to the end of the world. To this end, the providence of God took care to have it committed to writing. And that Mr. S. may see this is not a conjecture of Protestants, but the sense of former times, I shall refer him to St. Chrysostom; who tells us, (*homil.* 1. *in Matth.*), "that Christ left "nothing in writing to his Apostles; but, instead there- "of, did promise to bestow upon them the grace of his "Holy Spirit, saying, John xiv. *He shall bring all things* "*to your remembrance*, &c. But because in progress of "time there were many grievous miscarriages, both in "matter of opinion, and also of life and manners; there- "fore it was requisite, that the memory of this doctrine "should be preserved by writing." So long then as the Apostles lived, who were thus infallibly assisted, the way of oral tradition was secure, but no longer; nor even then, from the nature of the thing, but from that extraordinary and supernatural assistance which accompanied the deliverers.

§ 4. And

§ 4. And therefore it is no good way of argument againſt the way of tradition by writing, which he lays ſo much weight upon, *p.* 40. "That the Apoſtles and "their ſucceſſors went not with books in their hands, "to preach and deliver Chriſt's doctrine, but words in "their mouths; and that primitive antiquity learned "their faith by another method, a long time before many "of thoſe books were univerſally ſpread among the vul-"gar." For what if there was no need of writing this doctrine, whilſt thoſe living oracles, the Apoſtles, were preſent with the church; doth it therefore follow, that there was no need of it afterwards, when the Apoſtles were dead, and that extraordinary and ſupernatural aſſiſtance was ceaſed? If the preachers now-a days could give us any ſuch aſſurance, and confirm all they preach by ſuch frequent, and public, and unqueſtionable miracles as the Apoſtles did; then we need not examine the doctrines they taught by any other rule, but ought to regulate our belief by what they deliver to us. But ſeeing this is not the caſe, that ought in all reaſon to be the rule of our faith, which hath brought down to us the doctrine of Chriſt with the greateſt certainty; and this I ſhall prove the ſcriptures to have done.

§ 5. So that, in thoſe circumſtances I have mentioned, we allow oral tradition to have been a ſufficient way of conveying a doctrine: but now, conſidering the great increaſe of mankind, and the ſhortneſs of man's life in theſe latter ages of the world, and the long tract of time from the Apoſtles age down to us, and the innumerable accidents, whereby, in the ſpace of fifteen hundred years, oral tradition might receive inſenſible alterations, ſo as at laſt to become quite another thing from what it was at firſt, by paſſing through many hands; in which paſſage, all the miſtakes and corruptions which, in the ſeveral ages through which it was tranſmitted, did happen, either through ignorance, or forgetfulneſs, or out of intereſt and deſign, are neceſſarily derived into the laſt: ſo that the farther it goes, the more alteration it is liable to; becauſe, as it paſſeth along, more errors and corruptions are infuſed into it: I ſay, conſidering all this, we deny, that the doctrine of Chriſtian religion could, with any probable ſecurity and certainty, have

been conveyed down to us by the way of oral tradition; and therefore do reasonably believe, that God, foreseeing this, did in his wisdom so order things, that those persons who were assisted by an infallible spirit in the delivery of this doctrine, should, before they left the world, commit it to writing: which was accordingly done; and by this instrument, the doctrine of faith hath been conveyed down to us.

§ 6. *2dly*, We allow, that tradition, oral and written, do give us sufficient assurance, that the books of scripture, which we now have, are the very books which were written by the apostles and Evangelists; nay farther, that oral tradition alone is a competent evidence in this case: but withal we deny, that oral tradition is therefore to be accounted the rule of faith.

The general assurance that we have concerning books written long ago, that they are so ancient, and were written by those whose names they bear, is a constant and uncontrolled tradition of this, transmitted from one age to another, partly orally, and partly by the testimony of other books. Thus much is common to scripture with other books But then the scriptures have this peculiar advantage above other books, that being of a greater and more universal concernment, they have been more common and in every body's hands, more read and studied, than any other books in the world whatsoever; and consequently, they have a more universal and better grounded attestation. Moreover, they have not only been owned universally in all ages by Christians, except three or four books of them, which for some time were questioned by some churches, but have since been generally received; but the greatest enemies of our religion, the Jews and Heathens, never questioned the antiquity of them, but have always taken it for granted, that they were the very books which the Apostles writ. And this is as great an assurance as we can have concerning any ancient book, without a particular and immediate revelation.

§ 7. And this concession doth not, as Mr. S. supposeth, make oral tradition to be finally the rule of faith; for the meaning of this question, "What is the rule "of faith?" is, What is the next and immediate means where-

whereby the knowledge of Christ's doctrine is conveyed to us? So that although oral tradition be the means whereby we come to know, that these are the books of scripture; yet these books are the next and immediate means whereby we come to know, what is Christ's doctrine, and consequently what we are to believe.

§ 8. Nor doth this concession make oral tradition to be the rule of faith by a parity of reason; as if, because we acknowledge that oral tradition alone can with competent certainty transmit a book to after ages, we must therefore grant that it can with as much certainty convey a doctrine consisting of several articles of faith, (nay, very many, as Mr. White acknowledges, *Rushw. dial.* 4. § 9.), and many laws and precepts of life: so because oral tradition sufficiently assures us, that this is *magna charta*, and that the statute-book, in which are contained those laws which it concerns every man to be skilful in; therefore, by like parity of reason, it must follow, that tradition itself is better than a book, even the best way imaginable, to convey down such laws to us. Mr. S. saith expressly it is, *p.* 23; but how truly I appeal to experience, and the wisdom of all lawgivers, who seem to think otherwise. Tradition is already defined to us, "a delivery down from hand to hand of the sense and "faith of forefathers," *i. e.* of the gospel or message of Christ. Now, suppose any oral message, consisting of an hundred particularities, were to be delivered to an hundred several persons of different degrees of understanding and memory, by them to be conveyed to an hundred more, who were to be conveyed to others, and so onwards to a hundred descents; it is probable, this message, with all the particularities of it, would be as truly conveyed through so many mouths, as if it were written down in so many letters, concerning which every bearer should need to say no more than this, that it was delivered to him as a letter written by him whose name was subscribed to it? I think it not probable, though the men's lives were concerned every one for the faithful delivery of his errand or letter: for the letter is a message which no man can mistake in, unless he will; but the errand so difficult, and perplexed with its multitude of particulars, that it is an equal wager against every one of the messengers,

fengers, that he either forgets or miſtakes ſomething in it; it is ten thouſand to one, that the firſt hundred do not all agree in it; it is a million to one, that the next ſucceſſion do not all deliver it truly; for if any one of the firſt hundred miſtook or forgot any thing, it is then impoſſible that he that received it from him ſhould deliver it right; and ſo the farther it goes, the greater change it is liable to. Yet, after all this, I do not ſay but it may be demonſtrated, in Mr. S's way, to have more of certainty in it than the original letter.

§ 9. *3dly*, We allow, that the doctrine of chriſtian religion hath in all ages been preached to the people by the paſtors of the church, and taught by chriſtian parents to their children: but with great difference; by ſome more plainly, and truly, and perfectly; by others with leſs care and exactneſs, according to the different degrees of ability and integrity in paſtors or parents; and likewiſe with very different ſucceſs, according to the different capacities and diſpoſitions of the learners. We allow likewiſe, that there hath been a conſtant courſe of viſible actions, conformable, in ſome meaſure, to the principles of Chriſtianity; but then we ſay, that thoſe outward acts and circumſtances of religion may have undergone great variations, and received great change, by addition to them, and defalcation from them in ſeveral ages. That this not only is poſſible, but hath actually happened, I ſhall ſhew when I come to anſwer his demonſtrations. Now, that ſeveral of the main doctrines of faith contained in the Scripture, and actions therein commanded, have been taught and practiſed by Chriſtians in all ages, (as the articles ſummed up in the Apoſtles creed, the uſe of the two ſacraments) is a good evidence ſo far, that the Scriptures contain the doctrine of chriſtian religion. But then, if we conſider how we come to know that ſuch points of faith have been taught, and ſuch external actions practiſed in all ages, it is not enough to ſay, there is a preſent multitude of Chriſtians, that profeſs to have received ſuch doctrines as ever believed and practiſed, and from hence to infer that they were ſo; the inconſequence of which argument I ſhall have a better occaſion to ſhew afterwards: but he that will prove this to any man's ſatisfaction, muſt make it evident

evident from the beſt monuments and records of ſeveral ages, that is, from the moſt authentic books of thoſe times, that ſuch doctrines have in all thoſe ages been conſtantly and univerſally taught and practiſed. But then, if, from thoſe records of former times, it appear, that other doctrines, not contained in the ſcriptures, were not taught and practiſed univerſally in all ages, but have crept in by degrees, ſome in one age, and ſome in another, according as ignorance and ſuperſtition in the people, ambition and intereſt in the chief paſtors of the church, have miniſtered occaſion and opportunity: and that the innovators of theſe doctrines and practices have all along pretended to confirm them out of ſcripture, as the acknowledged rule of faith; and have likeways acknowledged the books of ſcripture to have deſcended without any material corruption or alteration, (all which will ſufficiently appear in the proceſs of my diſcourſe,) then cannot the oral and practical tradition of the preſent church concerning any doctrine, as ever believed and practiſed, which hath no real foundation in ſcripture, be any argument againſt theſe books, as if they did not fully and clearly contain the Chriſtian doctrine. And to ſay the ſcripture is to be interpreted by oral and practical tradition, is no more reaſonable, than it would be to interpret the ancient books of the law by the preſent practice of it; which every one that compares things fairly together, muſt acknowledge to be full of deviations from the ancient law.

Sect. V. *How much Mr. S. attributes to his rule of faith more than Proteſtants to theirs.*

§ 1. *Secondly,* HOW much more he attributes to his rule of faith than we think fit to attribute to ours.

1ſt, We do not ſay, that it is impoſſible, in the nature of the thing, that this rule ſhould fail; that is, either that theſe books ſhould ceaſe to deſcend, or ſhould be corrupted. This we do not attribute to them, becauſe there is no need we ſhould. We believe the providence of God will take care of them, and ſecure them from being either loſt or materially corrupted; yet we think it very

very possible, that all the books in the world may be burnt, or otherways destroyed. All that we affirm concerning our rule of faith, is, that it is abundantly sufficient, if men be not wanting to themselves, to convey the Christian doctrine to all successive ages; and we think him very unreasonable that expects that God should do more than what is abundantly enough for the perpetuating of Christian religion in the world.

§ 2. *2dly*, Nor do we say, that that certainty and assurance which we have that these books are the same that were written by the Apostles, is a first and self-evident principle; but only that it is a truth capable of evidence sufficient, and as much as we can have for a thing of that nature. Mr. S. may, if he please, say, that tradition's certainty is a first and self evident principle; but then he that says this, should take heed how he takes upon him to demonstrate it. Aristotle was so wise, as never to demonstrate first principles; for which he gives this very good reason, because they cannot be demonstrated. And most prudent men are of opinion, that a self-evident principle, of all things in the world, should not be demonstrated, because it needs not; for to what purpose should a man write a book to prove that which every man must assent to without any proof, so soon as it is propounded to him? I have always taken a self-evident principle to be such a proposition, as having in itself sufficient evidence of its own truth, and not needing to be made evident by any thing else. If I be herein mistaken, I desire Mr. S. to inform me better.

§ 3. So that the true state of the controversy between us, is, Whether oral and practical tradition, in opposition to writing and books, be the only way and means whereby the doctrine of Christ can with certainty and security be conveyed down to us, who live at this distance from the age of Christ and his Apostles? This he affirms; and the Protestants deny, not only that it is the sole means, but that it is sufficient for the certain conveyance of this doctrine; and withal affirm, that this doctrine hath been conveyed down to us by the books of Holy Scripture, as the proper measure and standard of our religion: but then they do not exclude oral tradition from being one means of conveying to us the certain knowledge

knowledge of these books; nor do they exclude the authentic records of former ages, nor the constant teaching and practice of this doctrine, from being subordinate means and helps of conveying it from one age to another; nay, so far are they from excluding these concurrent means, that they suppose them always to have been used, and to have been of great advantage for the propagating and explaining of this doctrine, so far as they have been truly subordinate to, and regulated by these sacred oracles, the Holy Scriptures, which, they say, do truly and fully contain that doctrine which Christ delivered to his Apostles, and they preached to the world. To illustrate this by an instance: suppose there were a controversy now on foot, how men might come to know what was the true art of logic which Aristotle taught his scholars; and some should be of opinion, that the only way to know this would be by oral tradition from his scholars; which we might easily understand, by consulting those of the present age who learned it from those who received it from them, who at last had it from Aristotle himself: but others should think it the surest way to study his *Organon*, a book acknowledged by all his scholars to have been written by himself, and to contain that doctrine which he taught them. They who take this latter course, suppose the authority of oral tradition for the conveying to them the knowledge of this book; and do suppose this doctrine to have been taught and practised in all ages, and a great many books to have been written by way of comment and explication of this doctrine; and that these have been good helps of promoting the knowledge of it. And they may well enough suppose all this, and yet be of opinion, that the truest measure and standard of Aristotle's doctrine is his own book; and that it would be a fond thing in any man, by forcing an interpretation upon his book, either contrary to, or very foreign and remote from the obvious sense of his words, to go about to reconcile this book with that method of disputing which is used by the professed Aristotelians of the present age, and with all that scholastic jargon which Mr. S. learned at Lisbon, and has made him so great a man in the science of controversy, as even to enable him to demonstrate first and self-evident

evident principles: A trick not to be learned out of Ariſtotle's *Organon*. The application is ſo eaſy, that I need not make it.

PART II.

Concerning the properties of the rule of faith; and whether they agree ſolely to oral tradition.

SECT I.

§ 1. HAving thus endeavoured to bring the controverſy between us to its clear and true ſtate, that ſo we might not quarrel in the dark, and diſpute about we know not what, I come now to grapple more cloſely with his book. And the main foundations of his diſcourſe may be reduced to theſe three heads.

1. That the eſſential properties of ſuch a way and means as can with certainty and ſecurity convey down to us the doctrine of Chriſt, belong ſolely to oral tradition. This he endeavours to prove in his firſt five diſcourſes.

2. That it is impoſſible that this way of oral tradition ſhould fail. And this he pretends to prove in his four laſt diſcourſes.

3. That oral tradition hath been generally reputed by Chriſtians in all ages the ſole way and means of conveying down to them the doctrine of Chriſt. And this he attempts to ſhew in his laſt chapter, which he calls, *The conſent of authority to the ſubſtance of the foregoing diſcourſes*. If he make good theſe three things, he hath acquitted himſelf well in his undertaking: but whether he hath made them good or not, is now to be examined.

§ 2. Firſt, Whether the eſſential properties of ſuch a way and means as can with certainty and ſecurity convey down to us the knowledge of Chriſt's doctrine, belong ſolely to oral tradition?

The true way to meaſure the eſſential properties of this or that means, is, by conſidering its ſufficiency for its end: for whatſoever is neceſſary to make any means ſufficient

ufficient for the obtaining its end, is to be reputed an eſſential property of that means, and nothing elſe. Now, becauſe the end we are ſpeaking of is the conveyance of the knowledge of Chriſt's doctrine to all thoſe who are concerned to know it, in ſuch a manner as they may be ſufficiently certain and ſecure, that it hath received no change or corruption from what it was when it was firſt delivered; from hence it appears, that the means to this end muſt have theſe two properties: 1. It muſt be ſufficiently plain and intelligible; 2. It muſt be ſufficiently certain to us; that is, ſuch as we may be fully ſatisfied concerning it, that it hath received no corruption or alteration. If it have theſe two conditions, it is ſufficient for its end: but if it want either of them, it muſt neceſſarily fall ſhort of its end: for if it be not plain and intelligible, it cannot convey this doctrine to our knowledge; if it be not certain, we cannot be aſſured, that the doctrine which it brings down to us for the doctrine of Chriſt, is really ſuch.

§ 3. I know he aſſigns more properties of this means, which he calls *the rule of faith*; but upon examination it will appear, that they either fall in with theſe two, or do not at all belong to it. As,

1*ſt*, That "it muſt be plain and ſelf-evident to all, "as to its exiſtence," *p.* 11. Nothing can be more frivolous than to make this a property of any thing; becauſe whoſoever inquires into the properties of a thing, is ſuppoſed to be already ſatisfied that the thing is.

2*dly*, That it be "evidenceable as to its ruling "power," *p.* 11.; that is, as he explains himſelf, "that "men be capable of knowing that it deſerves to be re-"lied on as a rule," *p.* 3. By which he muſt either underſtand the certainty of it; and then it falls in with the ſecond property I mentioned, and is the ſame with the ſixth which he lays down: or elſe he means more generally, that it is the property of a rule, that men be capable of knowing that it hath the properties of a rule; for I underſtand not how a man can know, that any thing deſerves to be relied on as a rule, otherwiſe than by knowing it hath the properties of a rule, that is, that it is ſufficient for its end. But at this rate a man may multiply the properties of things without end, if the e-

vidence of a thing, as to its exiſtence, be one property and then, that we be capable of knowing that it is ſuc. a thing, be another.

§ 4. *3dly*, That it be "apt to ſettle and juſtify un "doubting perſons," *p.* 12. What he means here by *ſettling undoubting perſons*, I am not able, on the ſudden to comprehend; becauſe I underſtand not what unſettles a man beſides doubting: for if a man be but ſo well ſatisfied about any thing as to have no doubt concerning it, I do not eaſily apprehend how he can be ſettled better that is, how his mind can be more at reſt than not to doubt. But if by *undoubting perſons* he means thoſe who do not doubt for the preſent, but afterwards may doubt then I perceive what he means by *apt to ſettle undoubting perſons*, *viz.* apt to ſettle perſons when they do doubt that is, when they are not undoubting perſons. As for *juſtifying undoubting perſons*, if he means, that whoſoever ſecurely relies on this rule, ought of right to be acquitted as acting rationally in ſo doing; this is plainly conſequent upon the two properties I have laid down: for if the means of conveying Chriſt's doctrine be ſufficiently plain and certain, every man that relies upon it is juſtified in ſo doing, becauſe he truſts a means which is ſufficient for its end.

§ 5. *4thly*, That it be "apt to ſatisfy fully the moſt "ſceptical diſſenters and rational doubters," *p.* 12. For its aptitude to ſatisfy rational doubters, that plainly follows from the ſufficient certainty of it; but why it ſhould be a neceſſary property of a rule of faith, to be apt to ſatisfy the moſt ſceptical diſſenter, I can no more divine, than I can why he ſhould call a diſſenter ſceptical, which are repugnant terms: for a ſceptic is one who neither aſſents to any thing, nor diſſents; but is in a perpetual ſuſpenſe, becauſe he looks upon every opinion as balanced by a contrary opinion of equal probability, without any inclination of the ſcales either way. But if by *the moſt ſceptical diſſenter* he means only a ſceptic, one that doth not believe the doctrine of Chriſt, nor any thing elſe, then I would fain know what that is which in reaſon is apt fully to ſatisfy ſuch a perſon. If any thing will, ſure a demonſtration will: but there is no aptitude at all in a demonſtration, to ſatisfy him who doubts

oubts whether there be any such thing as a demonration, and likeways questions the certainty of all ose principles from whence any conclusion can be deonstrated. And those who are most sceptical, profess doubt of all this.

§ 6. 5*thly*, That it be "apt to convince the most obstinate and acute adversary," *p.* 11. 12. If the rule plain and certain, the most acute adversary may be nvinced by it if he will; that is, if he be not obstinate: ut if he be obstinate, that is, such a one as will not be nvinced, but will persist in his error, in despite of all vidence that can be offered him, then I must profess, at I do not know any kind of evidence that is apt to nvince that man who will not be convinced by any ason that can be propounded to him. And that he ought ot to have expected this from any rule of faith, though ever so self-evident, he might have learned from the me author, in whom he may find his chief properties the rule of faith, if he had but had the patience to ve considered his explication of them: I mean Dr. olden, who lays down the second property of the rule faith, or, as he calls it, "the means whereby we come to the knowledge of revealed truth," in these words, *Analys. fid. l.* 1. *c.* 3.) "Another (*viz.* condition of this means, *&c.*) is, That it be apt of its own nature to afford the greatest, true, and rational certainty, to all men, without exception, to whom the knowledge of it shall come; provided they be furnished with the faculty of reason, and have their minds purified from all passion and lust, which do (as he tells us, *cap.* 6.) often hinder the most sagacious persons from understanding the most evident and manifest truth." Now, suppose obstinacy to be the effect of passion and lust.

If Mr. S. mean that the rule of faith must be apt to onquer obstinacy, and make men lay it aside, I cannot nderstand this neither; unless he mean, that the rule of ith must be a cudgel, which the traditionary church ave been good at, and may use it again when occasion rves: for none but they have a title to it upon a church ccount; as Mr. S. tells us, *corol.* 10. But, setting this side, I do not know any thing else that is apt to conuer obstinacy; not the clearest reason, or the strongest

demonstration; for that, I am sure, is no ways fitted to combat a wilful and unreasonable humour with any probability of success. And if any one doubt of this, if he will but make trial, he may easily be convinced by experience, how unapt obstinate persons are to be convinced by reason. I do not know any thing that ever carried greater evidence than the doctrine of Christ, preached by himself and his Apostles to the obstinate Jews and confirmed by multitudes of unquestionable miracles; and yet we do not find, by the success of it, that it was so very apt to convince those that were obstinate. And no man can judge of the aptitude of a means to an end, otherways than by the usual and frequent success of it when it is applied. Nor do I think that the doctrine of the gospel was ever intended for that purpose. God hath provided no remedy for the wilful and perverse; but he hath done that which is sufficient for the satisfying and winning over of those who are teachable and willing to learn. And such a disposition supposeth a man to have laid aside both scepticism and obstinacy.

§ 7. *6thly*, That it be "certain in itself," *p.* 12.

7thly, That it be "absolutely ascertainable to us, *p.* 12.

These two are comprehended in the second property I laid down; so that I have nothing to say against them but that the last looks very like a contradiction, "absolutely ascertainable to us;" which is to say, "with "respect to us, without respect to us;" for *absolutely* seems to exclude *respect*, and *to us* implies it.

Having thus shewn, that the seven properties he mentions are either coincident with those two I have laid down, or consequent upon them, or absurd and impertinent; it remains, that the true properties of a rule of faith are those two which I first named, and no more.

Sect. II. *That the properties of a rule of faith belong to scripture.*

§ 1. LET us now see how he endeavours to shew, that these properties agree solely to oral tradition. He tells us, there are but two pretenders to this title of being

ing the rule of faith, ſcripture, and oral tradition: ſe properties do not belong to ſcripture, and they do oral tradition; therefore ſolely to it. A very good ument, if he can prove theſe two things: "That theſe two properties do not belong to ſcripture, and that they do to oral tradition."

§ 2. In order to the proving of the firſt, that theſe perties do not belong to ſcripture, he premiſeth this e, *p.* 13. "That we cannot by the ſcriptures mean he ſenſe of them; but the book, that is, ſuch or ſuch characters not yet ſenſed or interpreted." But why can not by the ſcriptures mean the ſenſe of them? He es this clear and admirable reaſon, Becauſe the ſenſe of ſcripture is "the things to be known; and theſe we confeſs are the very points of faith of which the rule of faith is to aſcertain us." Which is juſt as if a man uld reaſon thus: thoſe who ſay the ſtatute-book can ivey to them the knowledge of the ſtatute-law, can- by the ſtatute-book mean the ſenſe of it, but the ok; that is, ſuch or ſuch characters not yet ſenſed or erpreted; becauſe the ſenſe of the ſtatute-book is the ng to be known, and theſe are the very laws, the owledge whereof is to be conveyed to them by this ok. Which is to ſay, that a book cannot convey to an the knowledge of any matter; becauſe, if it did, would convey to him the thing to be known. But t he may farther ſee what excellent reaſoning this is, all apply this paragraph to oral tradition; for the ar- nent holds every whit as well concerning that: "To peak to them in their own language, who ſay that oral tradition is the rule, we muſt premiſe this note, hat they cannot mean by oral tradition the ſenſe of t, that is, the things to be known: for thoſe they confeſs are the very points of faith of which the rule of faith is to aſcertain to us. When they ſay then, that o- al tradition is the rule of faith, they can only mean by oral tradition the words wherein it is delivered, not yet ſenſed or interpreted, but as yet to be ſenſed; that is, ſuch or ſuch ſounds, with their aptneſs to ſigni- fy to them aſſuredly God's mind, or aſcertain them of their faith: for, abſtracting from the ſenſe and actual ſignification of thoſe words, there is nothing imagi-

" nable left, but thoſe ſounds, with their aptneſs to ſi
" nify it." When he hath anſwered this argument, h
will have anſwered his own. In the mean while, th
diſcourſe, that he who holds the ſcriptures to be t
rule of faith, muſt needs by the ſcriptures mean a boo
void of ſenſe, *&c.* becauſe otherwiſe, if by ſcripture
ſhould underſtand a book that hath a certain ſenſe in
that ſenſe muſt be the doctrine of Chriſt, which is t
very thing that this book is to convey to us: I ſay, th
diſcourſe tends only to prove it an abſurd thing for a
man that holds ſcripture the means of conveying Chriſ
doctrine, to underſtand by the ſcripture a book that co
veys Chriſt's doctrine. This being his own reaſon p
into plain Engliſh, I leave the reader to judge whet
it be not ſomething ſhort of perfect ſcience and demo
ſtration. Nay, if it were thoroughly examined, I dou
whether it would not fall ſhort of that low pitch of ſ
ence which he ſpeaks of in his preface; where he te
us, that " the way of ſcience is to proceed from one pi
" of ſenſe to another."

§ 3. Having premiſed this, that by the ſcriptures
muſt only mean dead characters that have no ſenſe u
der them, he proceeds to ſhew, that theſe dead char
ters have not the properties of a rule of faith belongi
to them. Which, although it be nothing to the purp
when he hath ſhewn it, yet it is very pleaſant to obſe
by what croſs and untoward arguments he goes abo
it; of which I will give the reader a taſte, by one or t
inſtances.

In the firſt place, he ſhews, that it cannot be evide
to us, that " theſe books were written by men divin
" inſpired; becauſe, till the ſeeming contradictions
" thoſe books are ſolved, which to do, is one of the m
" difficult taſks in the world, they cannot be conclud
" to be of God's inditing," *p.* 14. Now, how is th
an argument againſt thoſe who by the ſcriptures m
mean unſenſed letters and characters? I had alwa
thought contradictions had been in the ſenſe of word
not in the letters and characters; but I perceive he ha
a peculiar opinion, that the four and twenty letters
contradict one another.

The other inſtance ſhall be in his laſt argumen
whi

which is this, *p.* 17. That "the scripture cannot be the "rule of faith, because those who are to be ruled and "guided by the scripture's letter to faith, cannot be cer-"tain of the true sense of it:" which is to say, that unsensed letters and characters cannot be the rule of faith, because the rule of faith must have a certain sense; that is, must not be unsensed letters and characters; which in plain English amounts to thus much, unsensed letters and characters cannot be the rule of faith, that they cannot.

§ 4. And thus I might trace him through all his properties of the rule of faith, and let the reader see how incomparably he demonstrates the falshood of this Protestant tenet, as he calls it, that a senseless book may be a rule of faith. But I am weary of pursuing him in these airy and phantastical combats; and shall leave him to fight with his own fancies, and to batter down the castles which himself hath built. Only I think fit to acquaint him, once for all, with a great secret of the Protestant doctrine, which it seems he hath hitherto been ignorant of, (for I am still more confirmed in my opinion, that he forsook our religion before he understood it) that when they say the scriptures are the rule of faith, or the means whereby Christ's doctrine is conveyed down to them, they mean by the scriptures, books written in such words as do sufficiently express the sense and meaning of Christ's doctrine.

§ 5. And to satisfy him that we are not absurd and unreasonable in supposing the scriptures to be such a book, I would beg the favour of him to grant me these four things, or shew reason to the contrary.

1. That whatever can be spoken in plain and intelligible words, and such as have a certain sense, may be written in the same words.

2. That the same words are as intelligible when they are written, as when they are spoken.

3. That God, if he please, can indite a book in as plain words as any of his creatures.

4. That we have no reason to think that God affects obscurity, and envies that men should understand him, in those things which are necessary for them to know; and which must have been written to no purpose, if we cannot

cannot understand them. St. Luke tells Theophilus, chap. i, 3. 4. that he wrote the history of Christ to him, on purpose to give him a *certain knowledge* of those things which he writ. But how a book which hath no certain sense, should give a man a certain knowledge of things, is beyond my capacity. St. John saith, chap. xx. 31. that he purposely committed several of Christ's miracles to writing, *that men might believe on him.* But now, had Mr. S. been at his elbow, he would have advised him to spare his labour; and would have given him this good reason for it, because, when he had written his book, no body would be able to find the certain sense of it without oral tradition; and that alone would securely and intelligibly convey both the doctrine of Christ and the certain knowlege of those miracles which he wrought for the confirmation of it. If these four things be but granted, I see not why, when the scriptures are the means of conveying to us Christ's doctrine, we may not be allowed to understand by the scriptures, a book which doth in plain and intelligible words express to us this doctrine.

Sect. III. *Mr. S.'s exceptions against scripture examined.*

§ 1. AND now, although this might have been a sufficient answer to his exceptions against the scriptures, as being incapable of the properties of a rule of faith; because all of them suppose that which is apparently false and absurd, as granted by Protestants, *viz.* that the scriptures are only a heap of dead letters and insignificant characters, without any sense under them; and that oral tradition is that only which gives them life and sense: yet, because several of his exceptions pretend to shew, that the true properties of a rule of faith do not at all appertain to the scriptures; therefore I shall give particular answers to them; and, as I go along, shew, that tradition is liable to all or most of those exceptions, and to far greater than those.

§ 2. First, Whereas he says, *p.* 13. "It cannot be evident to Protestants from their principles, that the "books of scripture were originally written by men divinely

vinely inſpired;" I will ſhew him, that it may, and then anſwer the reaſons of this exception.

It is evident, from an univerſal, conſtant, and uncontrouled tradition among Chriſtians, not only oral, but written, and from the acknowledgment of the greateſt adverſaries of our religion, that theſe books were originally written by the Apoſtles and Evangeliſts. And this is not only a Proteſtant principle, but the principle of all mankind, "That an undoubted tradition is ſufficient 'evidence of the antiquity and author of a book," and all the extrinſical argument that can ordinarily be had of a book written long ago.

Next, it is evident, that the Apoſtles were men divinely inſpired, that is, ſecured from error and miſtake in the writing of this doctrine, from the miracles that were wrought for the confirmation of it; becauſe it is unreaſonable to imagine, that the divine power ſhould ſo remarkably interpoſe for the confirmation of a doctrine, and give ſo eminent an atteſtation to the Apoſtles to convince the world, that they were immediately appointed and commiſſioned by God, and yet not ſecure them from error in the delivery of it. And that ſuch miracles were wrought, is evident from as credible hiſtories as we have for any of thoſe things which we do moſt firmly believe. And this is better evidence, that the Apoſtles were men divinely inſpired, than bare oral tradition can furniſh us withal; for ſetting aſide the authentic relation of theſe matters in books, it is moſt probable, that oral tradition of itſelf, and without books, would ſcarce have preſerved the memory of any of thoſe particular miracles of our Saviour and his Apoſtles which are recorded in ſcripture. And for the probability of this, I offer theſe two things to his conſideration.

1. No man can deny, that memorable perſons have lived, and actions been done in the world innumerable, whereof no hiſtory now extant makes any mention.

2. He himſelf will grant, that our Saviour wrought innumerable more miracles than are recorded in ſcripture. And now, I challenge him to ſhew the ſingle virtue of oral tradition, by giving an account of any of thoſe perſons, or their actions, who lived 1500 or 2000 years ago, beſides thoſe which are mentioned in books;

or

or to give a catalogue but of ten of these innumerable miracles wrought by our Saviour, which are not recorded by the Evangelists, with circumstances as punctual and particular as those are clothed withal. If he can do this, it will be a good evidence, that oral tradition singly, and by itself, can do something; but if he cannot, it is as plain an evidence, on the contrary, that if those actions of former times, and those miracles of our Saviour and his Apostles which are recorded in books, had never been written, but intrusted solely to oral tradition, we should have heard as little of them at this day, as we do of those that were not written.

§ 3. Now to examine his reasons for this exception:

1st, He saith, *p.* 13. "It is most manifest, that this "cannot be made evident to the vulgar, that scripture "was written by men divinely inspired." This reason is as easily answered, by saying, It is most manifest that it can. But besides saying so, I have shewed how it may be made as evident to the vulgar, as other things which they do most firmly, and upon good grounds, believe. Even the rudest of the vulgar, and those who cannot read, do believe upon very good grounds, that there was such a king as William the Conqueror; and the miracles of Christ and his Apostles are capable of as good evidence as we have for this.

2dly, He says, *p.* 13. 14. "This cannot be evident to "the curious and most speculative searchers, but by so "deep an inspection into the sense of scripture, as shall "discover such secrets that philosophy and human in-"dustry could never have arrived to:" As if we could not be assured, that any thing were written by men divinely inspired, unless it were above the reach of human understanding; and as if no man could know that this was our Saviour's doctrine, *Whatever ye would that men should do unto you, that do you likeways unto them*, because every one can understand it. But if there were more mysteries in the scriptures than there are, I hope a man might be satisfied, that they were written by men divinely inspired, without a clear comprehension of all those mysteries. The evidence of the inspiration of any person doth not depend upon the plainness or sublimity of the things revealed to him, but upon the goodness of the arguments which

which tend to perſuade us that the perſon is ſo inſpired; and the argument that is moſt fit to ſatisfy us of that, is, if he work miracles. Now, I would gladly know, why a learned man cannot be aſſured of a miracle, that is, a plain ſenſible matter of fact done long ago, but "by ſo 'deep an inſpection into the ſenſe of ſcripture, as ſhall 'diſcover ſuch ſecrets that philoſophy and human indu-'ſtry could never have arrived to."

§ 4. 3*dly*, Becauſe "all the ſeeming contradictions 'of Scripture muſt be ſolved, before we can out of the 'bare letter conclude the Scripture to be of God's in-'diting. To ſolve which literally, plainly and ſatis-'factorily, (he tells us), the memory of ſo many par-'ticulars, which made them clearer to thoſe of the 'age in which they were written, and the matter 'known, muſt needs be ſo worn out by track of time, 'that it is one of the moſt difficult tasks in the world, '*p.* 14." As if we could not believe a book to be of God's inditing, becauſe there ſeem now to be ſome contradictions in it, which we have reaſon to believe could eaſily have been ſolved by thoſe who lived in the age in which it was written; or as if oral tradition could help a man to ſolve theſe contradictions, when the memory of particulars neceſſary for the clear ſolution of them, is (as himſelf confeſſes) worn out by track of time. If Mr. S. can, in order to the ſolution of the ſeeming contradictions of ſcripture, demonſtrate, that oral tradition hath to this day preſerved the memory of thoſe particulars neceſſary for that purpoſe, the memory of which muſt needs be long ſince worn out by track of time, then I will readily yield, that his rule of faith hath in this particular the advantage of ours. But if he cannot do this, why doth he make that an argument againſt our rule, which is as ſtrong againſt his own? This is juſt like Captain Everard's friend's way of arguing againſt the Proteſtants, That they cannot rely upon ſcripture, becauſe it is full of plain contradictions, impoſſible to be reconciled; and therefore they ought in all reaſon to ſubmit to the infallibility of the church. And, for an inſtance of ſuch a contradiction, he pitched upon the three fourteen generations, mentioned in the firſt of St. Matthew; becauſe the

the third ſeries of generations. if they be counted, wil
be found to be but thirteen. Not to mention now hov
this difficulty hath been ſufficiently ſatisfied, both b
Proteſtant and Popiſh commentators, without any re
courſe to oral tradition; that which I take notice of, is
the unreaſonableneſs of making this an exception again
the Proteſtants, when it comes with every whit as muc
force upon themſelves. Suppoſe this contradiction nc
capable of any ſolution by Proteſtants, (as he affirms
and I ſhould ſubmit to the infallibility of the church
can he aſſure me that infallibility can make thirteer
fourteen? If it cannot, how am I nearer ſatisfaction i
this point, by acknowledging the infallibility of th
church? The caſe is the very ſame as to Mr. S.'s ex
ception. If I owned oral tradition, I ſhould be nevc
the nearer ſolving the ſeeming contradictions of ſcrip
ture; and conſequently I could not in reaſon cor
clude it to be of God's inditing. So that, in truth
theſe exceptions, if they were true, would not ſtrike
Proteſtancy, but at Chriſtian religion; which is the g
neral unhappineſs of moſt of the Popiſh argument
than which there is no greater evidence, that th
church of Rome is not the true mother; becauſe ſh
had rather Chriſtianity ſhould be deſtroyed, than it ſhou
appear that any other church hath a claim to it. It w
a work very proper for the heretic Marcion, to aſſau
religion this way; who, as Tertullian tells us, (*l.
contr. Marcion,*) writ a whole book, which he calle
Antitheſes; wherein he reckoned up all the contradict
ons (as he thought) between the Old and New Teſt
ment; but methinks it is very improper for the Papiſt
who pretends to be the only true Chriſtians in the worl
to ſtrain their wits, to diſcover as many contradictio
as they can in the ſcripture, and to prove that there
no way of reconciling them; the natural conſequenc
of which is, the expoſing of this ſacred inſtrument
our religion, and even Chriſtianity itſelf, to the ſcor
of Atheiſts. Therefore, to be very plain with Mr. S
and Captain Everard, I am heartily ſorry to ſee, tha
one of the chief fruits of their converſion is, to abu
the Bible.

§ 5. Secondly, He ſays, *p.* 14. "That Proteſtan
"cannc

cannot know how many the books of ſcripture ought to be; and which of the many controverted ones may be ſecurely put into that catalogue, which not." This he proves, by ſaying, "It is moſt palpable, that few, or at leaſt the rude vulgar, can never be aſſured of it." And if this be good argument, this again a good anſwer, to ſay, It is not moſt palpable. But I ıall deal more liberally, and tell him, that we know that ıſt ſo many ought to be received as uncontroverted ooks, concerning which it cannot be ſhewn there was ver any controverſy; and ſo many as controverted, oncerning which it appears that queſtion hath been ıade. And if thoſe which have been controverted, ave been ſince received by thoſe churches which once oubted of them, there is now no farther doubt con- rning them, becauſe the controverſy about them is at ı end. And now, I would fain know, what greater ertainty oral tradition can give us of the true catalogue f the books of ſcripture. For it muſt either acknow- dge ſome books have been controverted, or not. If ot, why doth he make a ſuppoſition of controverted ooks? If oral tradition acknowledge ſome to have been ontroverted, then it cannot aſſure us that they have ot been controverted, nor conſequently that they ought) be received as never having been controverted; but nly as ſuch, concerning which thoſe churches who did nce raiſe a controverſy about them, have been ſince ſa- sfied that they are canonical. The traditionary church ow receives the epiſtle to the Hebrews as canonical: ask, do they receive it as ever delivered for ſuch? 'hat they muſt, if they receive it from oral tradition, /hich conveys things to them under this notion, as ver delivered: and yet St. Hierom, ſpeaking not as a peculator, but a teſtifier, ſaith expreſsly of it, (*Com. ı Eſai. chap.* 6. 8.) "that the cuſtom of the Latin church doth not receive it among the canonical ſcrip- tures." What ſaith Mr. S. to this? It is clear rom this teſtimony, that the Roman church, in St. Hie- om's time, did not acknowledge this epiſtle for canoni- al; and it is as plain, that the preſent Roman church oth receive it for canonical. Where is then the infal- ibility of oral tradition? How does the living voice of

the preſent church aſſure us, that what books are no
received by her, were ever received by her? And if
cannot do this, but the matter muſt come to be tried b
the beſt records of former ages, which the Proteſtan
are willing to have their catalogue tried by, then it ſeem
the Proteſtants have a better way to know what bool
are canonical, than is the infallible way of oral tradit
on; and ſo long as it is better, no matter though it b
not called infallible.

§ 6. Thirdly, He ſays, *p.* 15. "The Proteſtants ca
"not know, that the very original, or a perfectly tr
"copy of theſe books, hath been preſerved." It is n
neceſſary that they ſhould know either of theſe; it
ſufficient that they know that thoſe copies which th
have, are not materially corrupted in any matter of fai
or practice: and that they have ſufficient aſſurance
this, I have already ſhewn. And how he doth prove t
contrary? By his uſual argument, with ſaying, "It
"manifeſtly impoſſible." But how do the church
Rome know, that they have perfectly true copies of t
ſcriptures in the original languages? They do not pr
tend to know this. The learned men of that chur
acknowledge the various readings as well as we, and
not pretend to know, otherwiſe than by probable co
jecture, as we alſo may do, which of thoſe readings
the true one. And why ſhould it be more neceſſary f
us to know this, than for them? If they think it re
ſonable to content themſelves with knowing, that
material corruptions have crept into thoſe books, ſo m
we. And that there have not, we know by better a
guments than oral tradition, even by the aſſurance
have of God's vigilant providence, and from a mo
impoſſibility in the thing, that a book ſo univerſally c
ſperſed, and tranſlated into ſo many languages, a
conſtantly read in the aſſemblies of Chriſtians, ſhou
have been materially corrupted, ſo as that all thoſe c
pies and tranſlations ſhould have agreed in thoſe co
ruptions. And this reaſon St. Auſtin (*Ep.* 48.) giv
of the preſervation of the ſcriptures entire, rather th
any other book. If Mr. S. likes it not, he may call S
Auſtin to account for it.

§ 7. Fourthly, He ſays, *p.* 15. "The Proteſtants,
"le

leaſt the rudeſt vulgar, can have no aſſurance that thoſe books are rightly tranſlated; becauſe they cannot be aſſured either of the ability or integrity of tranſlators."

Fifthly, "Nor can they (ſays he, *p.* 16. 17.) be aſſured, that the tranſcribers, and printers, and correctors of the preſs, have carefully and faithfully done their part in tranſcribing and printing the ſeveral copies and tranſlations of ſcripture aright; becauſe they only can have evidence of the right letter of ſcripture, who ſtood at their elbows attentively watching they ſhould not err in making it perfectly like a former copy; and even then, why might they not miſtruſt their own eyes, and aptneſs to overſee?" I put theſe two exceptions together, becauſe the ſame anſwer will ſerve them both. The grounds of theſe exceptions, if they have any, are theſe: That no man is to be truſted either for his skill or honeſty; and, That it is dangerous for men to truſt their own eyes. Unleſs both theſe be true, theſe exceptions are of no force: for if we can be aſſured that other men have ſufficient skill in any thing which we ourſelves do not ſufficiently underſtand, we may be aſſured that thoſe who tranſlated the Bible had skill in the original languages; becauſe very credible perſons tell us ſo, and we have no reaſon to doubt their teſtimony in this particular, more than in any other matter. So that, if we can have ſufficient aſſurance of mens integrity in any thing, we have no reaſon to doubt of the skill of tranſlators, tranſcribers, or printers: and if we can have no aſſurance of mens integrity in any thing, then no man can be aſſured there was ſuch a man as Henry VIII. and yet, I hope, the church of Rome makes no doubt of it: nor can any man be aſſured there is ſuch a city as Rome, who hath not ſeen it; nay, if we have, "why may he not miſtruſt his own eyes? *p.* 16. And, which is the ſaddeſt inconvenience of all," if no body be to be truſted, nor mens own eyes, (and for the ſame reaſon, ſure not their ears) what becomes of the infallibility of oral and practical tradition, which neceſſarily ſuppoſeth a competent underſtanding, a faithful memory, an honeſt mind, in the generality of thoſe who delivered Chriſt's doctrine down to us? and by

what means ſoever a man can be aſſured of theſe, by the ſame he may much more eaſily be aſſured of the ability and integrity of tranſlators, tranſcribers, and printers. But, above all, it ſuppoſeth that mens ears and eyes cannot deceive them in thoſe things which they are taught, and ſee practiſed.

Is it not very pretty to ſee what pitiful ſhifts men thaſerve an hypotheſis are put to; when, to maintain infallibility, they are forced to run to the extremities oſcepticiſm; and, to defend the certainty of oral tradition (which depends upon the certainty of mens ſenſes, an an aſſurance of the ability and integrity of thoſe wh were dead fifteen hundred years before we were born) ar glad to take refuge in principles quite contrary; ſuch a theſe, That we have no aſſurance, but that whole proſeſſions of men "might hap to be knaves," *page* 16 that we can have no ſufficient evidence that any ma made his "copy perfectly like the former, unleſs w "ſtood at his elbow attentively watching him, *ibid:* nay, and if we did ſo, we have ſtill reaſon to diſtruſt ouſenſes? In ſhort, all human faith ſuppoſeth honeſty among men; and that, for matters of fact and plain objects of ſenſe, the general and uncontrolled teſtimonof mankind is to be credited; and for matters of peculiar skill and knowledge, that the generality of thoſwho are accounted skilful in that kind are to be reliupon; for, as Ariſtotle well obſerves, there is no greatſign of an undiſciplined wit, (or, to uſe one of Mr. S. fine phraſes, *(in his preface)* of "a man not acquainte "with the paths of ſcience,") than to expect a greatevidence for things than they are capable of. Every mahath reaſon to be aſſured of a thing which is capable ofſufficient evidence, when he hath as much evidence foit as the nature of that thing will bear, and as the capacity he is in will permit him to have; and, as Mr. Whitſays well, *(Anſwer to the Lord Falkland, p. 33)* "ſatis "faction is to be given to every one, according to hi "capacity. It is ſufficient for a child to believe his pa "rents; for a clown, to believe his preacher." Anthis is univerſally true in all caſes where we have nobetter or equal evidence to the contrary. But ſuch ithe unhappineſs of the Popiſh doctrines, that if peopl

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re permitted the free use of the scripture, they would ily discern them to have no probable foundation in it, d to be plainly contrary to it; so that it cannot be e for their preachers to tell the people that the scrip- e is the only rule of faith, lest they should find cause t to believe them when they teach doctrines so plainly ntrary to that rule.

§ 8. Lastly, He says, *p.* 17. "The Protestants cannot be certain of the true sense of scriptures." Does he an of plain texts, or obscure ones? Of the true sense plain texts, I hope every one may be certain; and for scure ones, it is not necessary every one should. But nay be there are no plain texts in the scriptures; then e reason of it must be, (till Mr. S. can shew a better) her because it is impossible for any one to write plain- ; or because God cannot write so plainly as men; or cause we have good reason to think that he would not ite things necessary for every one to believe, so as men ght clearly understand him.

But he tells us, *p.* 17. "The numerous comments upon scripture are an evidence that no man can be certain of the true sense of it." I hope not: for if ose numerous commentators do generally agree in the ise of plain texts, (as it is certain they do) then this gument signifies nothing as to such texts: and as for ose which are obscure, let commentators differ about em as much as they please, so long as all necessary ints of faith and matters of practice are delivered in ain texts. He adds, *p.* 17. "There are infinite dis- putes about the sense of scripture, even in the most concerning points, as in that of Christ's divinity." it are not commentators, both Protestant and Papist, nerally agreed about the sense of scripture in that int? And what if some out of prejudice do mistake, out of perverseness do wrest, the plainest texts of scri- ure for the divinity of Christ, to another sense? is this y argument that those texts are not sufficiently plain? an any thing be spoken or written in words so clear om ambiguity, which a perverse or prejudiced mind all not be able to vex and force to another meaning? od did not write the scriptures for the froward and the ptious, but for those who will read them with a free-

and unprejudiced mind, and are willing to come to th knowledge of the truth. If Mr. S. had been conversan in the writings of the fathers, he could not but have ta ken notice with what confidence they attempted to prov the divinity of Christ out of scripture, as if that did af ford convincing arguments for this purpose. St. Chry soſtom *(hom. 32. de conſub.)* profeſſes to demonſtrate ou of scripture, that " the Son is of the same ſubſtance wit " the Father;" and relies upon scripture alone for thi without mentioning any other kind of argument: t that it seems St. Chryſoſtom was not acquainted wit the inſufficiency of scripture for the conviction of here tics in this point; and that he was either ignorant o the (infallible) way of demonſtrating this point from or tradition, or had no great opinion of it. The same f ther elſewhere, arguing againſt heretics about the div nity of Christ, says, *(hom. 7. de Sancto Phoca,)* that " th " pervert the scriptures, to ſtrengthen their hereſy fro " thence." But then he does not (with Mr. S.) blan the scriptures, and say, that this doctrine is not there d livered with ſufficient clearneſs; but contraryways h says, that " the scripture is clear enough, but the co " rupt minds of heretics will not see what is there contai " ed." Had St. Chryſoſtom been a true Son of the tr ditionary church, he would have laid hold of this o caſion to vilify the scriptures, and to ſhew the neceſ ty of regulating our faith, not by ſuch uncertain record but by the infallible reports of oral tradition.

§ 9. But becauſe Mr. S. lays great weight (in ſever parts of his book) upon this exception againſt ſcriptu *viz.* " That Proteſtants cannot be certain of the tr " ſenſe of it;" therefore I ſhall not content myſelf or to have ſhewn, that we may be ſufficiently certain the ſenſe of scripture, ſo far as to underſtand all nec ſary matters of faith and practice, and that more th this is not neceſſary: but ſhall likeways return this e ception upon him, by inquiring into theſe two things

1. How the traditionary church can be more certa of the true ſenſe of scripture than the Proteſtants?

2. How they can be more certain of the true ſen of tradition, than Proteſtants of the true ſenſe of ſcri ture?

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1*ſt*, How the traditionary church can be more certain of the true ſenſe of ſcripture than Proteſtants? They pretend to have an oral tradition of the true ſenſe of it delivered down from father to ſon. But this only reacheth to thoſe texts which are coincident with the main body of Chriſtian doctrine. As for all other parts of ſcripture, they are as uſeleſs to Papiſts, as they ſuppoſe they are to us; becauſe, wanting the help of oral tradition, they cannot be certain of one tittle of them. And as for thoſe texts, the ſenſe whereof is conveyed down by oral tradition; this ſenſe is, I hope, delivered in ſome words or other. And have all preachers, and fathers, and mothers, and nurſes, the faculty of delivering this ſenſe in words ſo plain as cannot poſſibly be miſtaken, or wreſted to another ſenſe? I am ſorry, that, when every one hath this faculty of ſpeaking their thoughts plainly, the Holy Ghoſt ſhould be repreſented as not able to convey his mind to men in intelligible words. And does not his own objection rebound upon himſelf? If the church have a certain ſenſe of ſcripture orally delivered, whence are the numerous comments of the fathers upon it, and of later writers of their church, and the infinite diſputes about the ſenſe of it, in the moſt concerning points, *viz.* the efficacy of God's grace, the ſupremacy of St. Peter, the infallibility of a Pope and council by immediate aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt? What a ſtir is made about the ſenſe of *Dabo tibi claves*; *Tu es Petrus, et ſuper hanc petram, &c. Paſce oves?* Do not they differ about the meaning of theſe texts among themſelves, as much as they do from the fathers, and from the Proteſtants? ſome underſtanding them of St. Peter's ſupremacy only, others of his infallibility, others of his infallibility only in and with a general council; which yet others do not allow to Pope or council from any immediate aſſiſtance, but only from the rational force of tradition, ſuppoſing that the Pope and council hold to it. If oral tradition have brought down a certain ſenſe of theſe texts, why do they not produce it, and agree to it? If it have not, to uſe a hot phraſe of his own, *p.* 17. "it is perfect phrenzy to ſay they can be "certain of the true ſenſe of ſcripture."

If he ſay, they are by tradition made certain of the true

true ſenſe of ſcripture, ſo far as it concerns the main body of Chriſtian doctrine, and do all agree in it, and that is ſufficient; then I ask him, What are thoſe points of faith which make up the body of Chriſtian doctrine? He will tell me, They are thoſe which all Catholics agree to have deſcended to them from the Apoſtles, by a conſtant and uninterrupted tradition. I inquire further, How I ſhall know what is the certain ſenſe of ſcripture, ſo far as it concerns theſe points? He muſt anſwer as before, That that is the true ſenſe which all Catholics agree to have deſcended to them by tradition; which amounts to this, that all Catholics do agree in the ſenſe of ſcripture, ſo far as they do all agree in it. It is to be hoped, that the Proteſtants, how much ſoever at preſent they differ about the ſenſe of ſcripture, may in time come to as good an agreement as this. This brings to my remembrance a paſſage or two of Mr. Creſſy. The one in his *Appendix*, (*Exomolog. edit.* 2. *p.* 554.) where he tells us, that "as it is impoſſible that heretics ſhould "agree any other way than in faction, ſo it is impoſſible "that Catholics ſhould differ in points of faith." Why ſo? Were not thoſe Catholics firſt who afterwards became heretics? and, when they became ſo, did they not differ in points of belief? Yes. But here lies the conceit: When they began to differ, then they ceaſed to be Catholics; therefore Catholics can never differ in points of faith. The other paſſage is where he ſays, (*Exomolog. c.* 53. § 2.) that "he hath forſaken a church where "unity was impoſſible, *&c.* and betaken himſelf to a "church where ſchiſm is impoſſible." This laſt clauſe, "That ſchiſm is impoſſible in their church," cannot poſſibly be true, but in the ſame abſurd and ludicrous ſenſe in which it is impoſſible for Catholics to differ in points of belief. For he cannot deny, but that it is poſſible for men to break off from the communion of their church, which in his ſenſe is ſchiſm. But here is the ſubtilty of it. No ſchiſmatic is of their church, becauſe, ſo ſoon as he is a ſchiſmatic, he is out of it; therefore ſchiſm is impoſſible in their church. And is it not as impoſſible in the church of England? where Mr. Creſſy might have done well to have continued,

ed, till he could have given a wiser reason of forsaking her.

§ 10. But to return to our purpose: Mr. Rushworth acknowledgeth, (*Dial.* 2. § 12.) that the scripture is of itself sufficiently plain as to matters of practice; for he asks, "Who is so blind as not to see, that these things "are to be found in scripture by a sensible, common, "and discreet reading of it, though perhaps, by a rigo- "rous and exact balancing of every particular word and "syllable, any of these things would vanish away we "know not how?" So that, for the direction of our lives and actions, he confesseth the scripture to be sufficiently plain, if men will but read it sensibly and discreetly; and he says, that he is blind that does not see this. But who so blind as he that will not see, that the sense of scripture is as plain in all necessary points of faith? I am sure St. Augustin (*De doct. Christ, l.* 2.) makes no difference, when he tells us, that "in those things "which are plainly set down in scripture, we may find "all those things in which faith, and manners of life, are "comprehended." And why cannot men, in reference to matters of faith, as well as of practice, read the scriptures sensibly and discreetly, without such a rigorous balancing of every word and syllable as will make the sense vanish away we know not how? If the scripture be but sufficiently plain to such as will use it sensibly and discreetly, I do not understand what greater plainness can be desired in a rule; nor can I imagine what kind of rule it must be that can be unexceptionably plain to captious cavillers, and such as are bent to play the fool with it.

Well, suppose the scriptures be not sufficiently clear as to matters of faith, and hereupon I have recourse to the church for the true sense of scripture, must I believe the church's sense to be the true sense of such a text, though I see it to be plainly contrary to the genuine sense of the words? Yes; that I must, or else I make myself, and not the church, judge of the sense of scripture; which is the grand heresy of the protestants. But then I must not suppose, much less believe, that the church's sense of such a text is contrary to the genuine meaning of it; no, although I plainly see it to be so. This is hard again, on the other hand; especially if that

that be true which is acknowledged both by Dr. Holden and Mr. Creſſy, *viz.* that though general councils cannot miſtake in the points of faith which they decree, yet they may miſtake in the confirmation of them from texts of ſcripture: that is, they may be miſtaken about the ſenſe of thoſe texts. And if Mr. S. think his brethren have granted too much, he may ſee this exemplified in the ſecond council of Nice, to mention no other; which, to eſtabliſh their doctrine of image-worſhip, does ſo palpably abuſe and wreſt texts of ſcripture, that I can hardly believe, that any papiſt in the world hath the forehead to own that for the true ſenſe of thoſe texts which is there given by thoſe fathers.

§ 11. 2*dly*, How the traditionary church can be more certain of the true ſenſe of their traditional doctrines, than the Proteſtants can be of the true ſenſe of ſcripture? And this is worthy of our inquiry; becauſe, if the buſineſs be ſearched to the bottom, it will appear, (beſides all other inconveniences which oral tradition is much more liable to than ſcripture,) that the certain ſenſe and meaning of traditional doctrine is as hard to come at as the ſenſe of ſcripture. And this I will make appear by neceſſary conſequence from their own conceſſions. Mr. White and Mr. S. ſay, that the great ſecurity of tradition is this, that it is not tied to certain phraſes and ſet forms of expreſſion, but the ſame ſenſe is conveyed, and ſettled in mens hearts by various expreſſions. But, according to Mr. Ruſhworth, this renders tradition's ſenſe uncertain; for he ſays, (*Dial.* 2. § 6.) "It is impoſſible "to put fully, and beyond all quarrel, the ſame ſenſe "in divers words." So that if men do not receive tradition in a ſenſible, common, diſcreet way, (as Mr. Ruſhworth ſpeaks concerning reading the ſcriptures,) but will come to a rigorous and exact balancing of every particular phraſe, word, and ſyllable, the ſenſe of tradition will be in the very ſame danger of uncertainty, and be liable to vaniſh we know not how. Dr. Holden (*Analyſ. fidei, l.* 1. *c.* 9.) lays down theſe two principles. "Firſt, That no truth can be conveyed down "from man to man, but by ſpeech; and ſpeech cannot "be but by words; and all words are either equivocal "in themſelves, or liable to be differently underſtood "by

" by several persons. Secondly, That such is the frame " of man's mind, that the same truths may be different- " ly apprehended and understood by different persons." And if this be true, then traditional doctrines, if they be delivered by speech and words, will be liable to uncertainties and ambiguities, as to their sense, as well as scripture. Mr. Cressy (*Append. c.* 6.) tells us, that rea- " son and experience shew, that differences will arise " even about the writings of the fathers, and any thing " but the testimony of the present church." If this be true, tradition wholly falls into uncertainty: for if difference will arise about the writings of the fathers, how they are to be interpreted, I suppose the writings of councils will be liable to the same inconvenience; and if the whole present church cannot declare her sense of any traditional doctrine, otherways than by a council, unless with the Jesuits they will epitomise the church into the Pope; and the decrees of a council cannot be universally dispersed, or at least never use to be, but by writing; and if differences will arise about the interpretation of that writing, as well as any other, then this present infallible authority, which Mr. Cressy magnifies so much for ending of differences, leaves all controversies arising about the sense of tradition as indeterminable as ever: and they must for ever remain so, till general councils have got the knack of penning their decrees in words, which will so infallibly express their meaning, to the most captious caviller, that no difference can possibly arise about the interpretation of them; or else, which will be more suitable to this wise hypothesis, till general councils, being convicted by Mr, S.'s demonstrations, shall come to understand themselves so well, as not to intrust their decrees any more to the uncertain way of writing, but for the future to communicate them to the world by the infallible way of oral tradition. And, to mention no more, Mr. Knott, (*Answer to Chillingworth, c.* 2. § 6.) who agrees with the other thus far, that the certain sense of scripture is only to be had from the church, speaks to this purpose, That before we can be certain that this is the true sense of such a text, we must either be certain that this text is capable of no other sense, as figurative, mystical, or moral; or if it be, we must

muſt have ſome certain and infallible means to know in which of them it is taken; which can be known only by revelation. If this be true, then, by a fair parity of reaſon, before I can be certain that this is the ſenſe of a doctrinal tradition delivered down to me, I muſt either be certain that the words in which this tradition was expreſſed, when it was delivered to me, are capable of no other ſenſe, as figurative, myſtical, or moral, beſide that in which I underſtand them; or if they be, as certainly they will be, capable of any of theſe other ſenſes then muſt I have ſome certain and infallible means whereby to know in which of theſe they are taken. And this can no more be known without a revelation, than which is the true ſenſe of ſuch a text of ſcripture. If it be ſaid, that the ſenſe of a traditionary doctrine may by different expreſſions, be ſtill farther and farther explained to me till I come certainly to underſtand the ſenſe of it; this will not help the matter: for if theſe kinds of cavils be good, that a man cannot be certain of the meaning of any words, till he can by an infallible argument demonſtrate, either that they cannot be taken or that they are not taken in any other ſenſe; I ſay, if this cavil will hold, then every new expreſſion, whereby any one ſhall endeavour to explain any traditional doctrine is liable to the ſame inconvenience which thoſe words in which it was firſt delivered to me were liable to. From all which it is evident, that the traditionary church can be no more certain of the ſenſe of their traditional doctrines than Proteſtants may be of the ſenſe of ſcripture.

§ 12. Theſe are his exceptions contained in his ſecond diſcourſe; and of what force they are, hath been examined. But becauſe he foreſaw that it might be replied, that theſe defects might in part be provided againſt "by hiſtory, by the providence of God, by teſtimonies of councils and fathers, and by the ſufficient "clearneſs of ſcripture as to fundamentals;" he endeavours to ſhew, that theſe ſignify little to this purpoſe.

1*ſt*, "Not hiſtory; becauſe few are ſkilled in hiſtory; "and they that are not, cannot ſafely rely upon thoſe "that are ſkilled, unleſs they know certainly, that the "hiſtorians whom they rely on, had ſecure grounds,

"and

and not bare hearſay, for what they writ; and that they were not contradicted by others, either extant or periſhed," *p.* 17. 18. How much credit is to be given to uncontrolled hiſtory by the learned, and how much by the vulgar to men of skill, I have already ſhewn. I ſhall only add now, that if this reaſoning be true, it is impoſſible for any man to be certain, by hiſtory, of any ancient matter of fact; as, namely, that there were ſuch perſons as Julius Cæſar and William the Conqueror, and that they invaded and conquered England; becauſe, according to him, we cannot know certainly, that the hiſtorians who relate theſe things, and upon whoſe authority we rely, " had ſecure grounds, and not bare hearſay, for what they writ." And " that they were not contradicted by others, either extant or periſhed," is, I am ſure, impoſſible for any man to know: for who can tell now what was contained in thoſe books which are periſhed? So that if this be requiſite to make every hiſtorical relation credible, to know certainly that it was not contradicted by any of thoſe books which we do not now what they were, nor what was in them, we can have no certainty of any ancient fact or hiſtory. For who knows certainly, that ſome books that are periſhed, did not contradict whatever is written in books that are extant? Nay, if this reaſoning hold, we can have no certainty of any thing conveyed by oral tradition. For what though the prieſt tell me this was the doctrine of Chriſt delivered to him? Unleſs I know that all others agree with him in this tradition, I cannot rely upon his teſtimony. Nor then neither, in Mr. Knot's opinion, *Anſw. to Chillingworth, c.* 1. § 33.) " becauſe the teſtimony of preachers or paſtors is human and fallible, unleſs (according to his jargon) a concluſion deduced from premiſes, one of which is only probable, may be ſufficient to bring our underſtanding to an infallible act of faith, *viz.* if ſuch a concluſion be taken *ſpecificativè*; whereas, if it be taken *reduplicativè*, as it is a concluſion, it can only beget a probable aſſent:" which is to ſay, that conſidered barely as a concluſion, and ſo far as in reaſon it can deſerve aſſent, it is only probable; but conſidered as it ſerves an hypotheſis, and is convenient to be believed with reaſon or without, ſo it

it is infallible. But to carry the suppoſition farther Put the caſe, that the whole preſent age aſſembled in general council, ſhould declare that ſuch a point was de livered to them; yet, according to Mr. S. we cannc ſafely rely upon this, unleſs we knew certainly, tha thoſe whom they relied on "had ſecure grounds, an "not bare hearſay, for what they delivered; and tha "they were not contradicted within the ſpace of 150 "years, by any of thoſe that are dead;" which is im poſſible for any one now to know.

But to ſhew how inconſiſtent he is with himſelf i theſe matters, I will preſent the reader with a paſſage c two in another part of his book, where he endeavou to prove, that men may ſafely rely on a general and ur controuled tradition. He tells us, *p.* 49. that "th "common courſe of human converſation makes it mac "neſs, not to believe great multitudes of knowers, "no poſſible conſiderations can awaken in our reaſo "a doubt that they conſpire to deceive us." And little after, *ibid.* "Nor can any, unleſs their brains rov "wildly, or be unſettled even to the degree of madneſ "ſuſpect deceit, where ſuch multitudes agree unan "mouſly in a matter of fact." Now, if men be bi ſuppoſed to write, as well as to ſpeak, what they knov and to agree in their writings about matter of fact then it will be the ſame "madneſs, not to believe mu "titudes of hiſtorians, where no poſſible conſideratio "can awaken in our reaſon a doubt that they hav "conſpired to deceive us; and mens brains muſt rov "wildly, and be unſettled even to the degree of frenzy "who ſuſpect deceit where ſuch multitudes unanimou "ly agree in a matter of fact." And this ſeems to be th great unhappineſs of Mr. S.'s demonſtrations, that the proceed upon contradictory principles; ſo that, in orde to the demonſtrating of the uncertainty of books an writings, he muſt ſuppoſe all thoſe principles to be ur certain, which he takes to be ſelf-evident and unqueſti onable, when he is to demonſtrate the infallibility of c ral tradition.

§ 13. 2*dly*, He tells us, *p.* 18. "The providence c "God is no ſecurity againſt thoſe contingencies th "ſcriptur

'scriptures are subject to; because we cannot be certain of divine providence, or assistance to his church, 'but by letter of scripture; therefore that must first be 'proved certain, before we mention the church, or 'God's assistance to her:" As if we pretended there were any promise in scripture, that God would preserve the letter of it entire and uncorrupted, or as if we could not otherways be assured of it; as if the light of natural reason could not assure us of God's providence in general, and of his more especial care of those things which are of greatest concernment to us; such as this is, that a book containing the method and the terms of salvation should be preserved from any material corruption. He might as well have said, that without the letter of scripture we cannot know that there is a God.

§ 14. 3*dly*, "Nor (says he, *p.* 18. 19.) can testimo-'nies of councils and fathers be sufficient interpreters 'of scripture." We do not say they are. Our principle is, That the scripture doth sufficiently interpret itself, that is, is plain to all capacities, in things necessary to be believed and practised. And the general consent of fathers in this doctrine of the sufficient plainness of scripture (which I shall afterwards shew) is a good evidence against them. As for obscure and more doubtful texts, we acknowledge the comments of the fathers to be a good help, but no certain rule of interpretation: And that the Papists think so as well as we, is plain; inasmuch as they acknowledge the fathers to differ among themselves in the interpretation of several texts: and nothing is more familiar in all Popish commentators, than to differ from the ancient fathers about the sense of scripture. And as for councils, Dr. Holden and Mr. Cressy (as I said before) do not think it necessary to believe that always to be the true sense of texts which councils give of them, when they bring them to confirm points of faith. Nay, if any controversy arise about the sense of any text of scripture, it is impossible, according to Mr. Rushworth's principles, for a council to decide either that, or any other controversy: for (*Dial.* 2. § 8.) he makes it his business to prove, that controversies cannot be decided by words: and if this be so, then they cannot be decided at all, unless he can

prove, that they may be decided without words, an
conſequently that councils may do their work beſt i
the Quakers way, by ſilent meetings.

§ 15. 4*thly*, "Nor can (ſays he, *p.* 20. 21.) the clea
"neſs of ſcripture as to fundamentals, be any help a
"gainſt theſe defects." Why not?

1. "Becauſe a certain catalogue of fundamentals w
"never given and agreed to by ſufficient authority
"and yet without this all goes to wreck." I hope no
ſo long as we are ſure that God would make nothir
neceſſary to be believed but what he hath made plain
and ſo long as men do believe all things that are plain
ly revealed, (which is every one's fault if he do not
men may do well enough without a preciſe catalogu
But ſuppoſe we ſay, that the articles of the Apoſtl
creed contain all neceſſary matters of ſimple belief, wh
hath Mr. S. to ſay againſt this? I am ſure the Roma
catechiſm, ſet forth by the decree of the council
Trent, ſays (*præfat.*) as much as this comes to; *vi*
"That the Apoſtles having received a command
"preach the goſpel to every creature, thought fit
"compoſe a form of Chriſtian faith, namely to th
"end, that they might all think and ſpeak the ſam
"things, and that there might be no ſchiſms amor
"thoſe whom they had called to the unity of faith
"but that they might all be perfect in the ſame ſen
"and the ſame opinion: and this profeſſion of the Chri
"tian faith and hope, ſo framed by them, the Apoſtl
"called *the ſymbol or creed.*" Now, how this end
bringing men to unity of faith, and making them pe
fectly of the ſame ſenſe and opinion, could probably
attained by means of the creed, if it did not contain a
neceſſary points of ſimple belief, I can by no means un
derſtand. Beſides, a certain catalogue of fundamen
tals is as neceſſary for them as for us; and when Mr.
gives in his, ours is ready. Mr. Chillingworth had
great deſire to have ſeen Mr. Knott's catalogue of fun
damentals, and challenged him to produce it; and o
fered him very fairly, that whenever he might with on
hand receive his, he would with the other deliver h
own: but Mr. Knott, though he ſtill perſiſted in th
ſame demand, could never be prevailed with to brin
fort

forth his own, but kept it for a secret to his dying day. But, to put a final stop to this canting demand of a catalogue of fundamentals, which yet I perceive I shall never be able to do, because it is one of those expletive topicks which Popish writers, especially those of the lowest form, do generally make use of to help out a book; however, to do what I can towards the stopping of it, I desire Mr. S. to answer the reasons whereby his friend Dr. Holden (*Analys. fid. l.* 1. *c.* 4.) shews the unreasonableness of this demand; and likewise endeavours to prove that such a catalogue would not only be useless and pernicious if it could be given, but that it is manifestly impossible to give such a precise catalogue.

2. He asks, *p.* 21. "Is it a fundamental, that Christ "is God? If so, whether this be clearer in scripture, "than that God hath hands, feet, *&c.*?" To which I answer by another question, Is it clear, that there are figures in scripture, and that many things are spoken after the manner of men, and by way of condescension and accommodation to our capacities; and that custom and common sense teacheth men to distinguish between things figuratively and properly spoken? If so, why cannot every one easily understand, that when the scripture saith, *God hath hands and feet*, and that *Christ is the vine*, and *the door*, these are not to be taken properly, as we take this proposition, that "Christ is God;" in which no man hath any reason to suspect a figure? When Mr. S. tells us, that "he percheth upon the specifical nature "of things," would it not offend him, if any one should be so silly as to conclude from hence, that Mr. S. believed himself to be a bird, and nature a perch? And yet not only the scriptures, but all sober writers, are free from such forced and phantastical metaphors. I remember, that Origen (*l.* 4.) taxeth Celsus's wilful ignorance, in finding fault with the scriptures, for "attributing to "God human affections, as anger, *&c.*;" and tells him, "that any one who had a mind to understand the "scriptures, might easily see, that such expressions were "accommodated to us, and accordingly to be under-"stood; and that no man that will but compare these "expressions with other passages of scripture, need to "fail of the true sense of them." But, according to Mr.

S., Origen was to blame to find fault with Celsus, for thinking that the scripture did really attribute humar affections to God; for how could he think otherwise, when "the most fundamental point is not clearer in "scripture, than that God hath hands, feet, &c.?" How could Origen in reason expect from Celsus, (tho' never so great a philosopher), that he should be able, without the help of oral tradition, to distinguish between what is spoken literally, and what by a certain scheme of speech? Theodoret (*Hæret. fabul. l.* 4.) tells us of one Audæus, who held that God had a human shape and bodily members; but he does not say, that the reason of this error was because he made scripture the rule of his faith, but expressly because "he was a fool, and "did foolishly understand those things which the di-"vine scriptures speak by way of condescension." So that although Mr. S. is pleased to make this wise objection, yet it seems, according to Theodoret, that men do not mistake such texts, either for want of oral tradition, or of sufficient clearness in the scriptures, but for want of common reason and sense. And if Mr. S. know of any rule of faith that is secure from all possibility of being mistaken by foolish and perverse men, I would be glad to be acquainted with it, and with him for its sake.

SECT. IV. *That scripture is a sufficient rule to the unlearned, and to the most rational doubters.*

§ 1. IN his next discourse, he endeavours to shew, that unlearned persons cannot be justified as acting rationally in receiving the scripture for the word of God, and relying upon it as a certain rule; because they are not capable of satisfaction concerning these matters. But I have already shewn that they are, and shall not repeat the same over again. And whereas he says, *p.* 24. That "several professions all pretend to scripture, and "yet differ, and damn, and persecute one another a-"bout these differences;" the answer is easy: That they all pretend to scripture, is an argument that they all acknowledge it to be the word of God, and the rule of faith; and that they are generally agreed about the sense of those plain texts which contain the fundamental points of faith, is evident, in that those several profes-

sions

sions acknowledge the articles contained in the Apostles creed to be sufficiently delivered in scripture: and if any professions differ about the meaning of plain texts, that is not an argument that plain texts are obscure, but that some men are perverse. And if those professions damn and persecute one another about the meaning of obscure texts, the scripture is not in fault, but those that do so.

§ 2. And whereas he pretends, *p.* 25. 26. 27. that "the scripture is not able to satisfy sceptical dissenters "and rational doubters, because nothing under a demonstration can satisfy such persons so well concerning the incorruptedness of originals, the faithfulness of "translations, *&c.* but that searching and sincere wits "may still maintain their ground of suspense with a "Might it not be otherwise?" This hath been answered already, partly by shewing, that the scripture was not intended to satisfy scepticks, and that a demonstration is not sufficient to give satisfaction to them; and partly, by shewing that rational doubters may have as much satisfaction concerning those matters, as the nature of the thing will bear: and he is not a rational doubter that desires more.

But, that he may see the unreasonableness of this discourse, I shall briefly shew him, that all mankind do, in matters of this nature, accept of such evidence as falls short of demonstration? and that his great friends and masters, from whom he hath taken the main grounds of his book, though he manageth them to less advantage, do frequently acknowledge, that it is reasonable for men to acquiesce in such assurance as falls short of infallibility, and such evidence as is less than demonstration. Do not mankind think themselves sufficiently assured of the antiquity and authors of several books, for which they have not demonstrative evidence? Doth not Aristotle say, that things of a moral and civil nature, and matters of fact done long ago, are incapable of demonstration; and that it is madness to expect it for things of this nature? Are there no passages in books so plain, that a man may be sufficiently satisfied, that this and no other is the certain sense of them? If there be none, can any thing be spoken in plainer words than it may be written? If it cannot, how can we be satisfied of

of the certain ſenſe of any doctrine orally delivered? And, if we cannot be ſo ſatisfied, where is the certainty of oral tradition? But if books may be written ſo plainly as that we may be abundantly ſatisfied, that this is the certain ſenſe of ſuch and ſuch paſſages, then we may reaſonably reſt ſatisfied in evidence for theſe matters ſhort of demonſtration. For was ever the ſenſe of any words ſo plain as that there did not remain this ground of ſuſpenſe, that thoſe words might be capable of another ſenſe? Mr. Ruſhworth *(Dialog. 2. §. 7.)* ſays, that "diſputative ſcholars do find means daily to explicate "the plaineſt words of an author to a quite different "ſenſe." And that the world might be furniſhed with an advantageous inſtance of the poſſibility of this, Naudus, *(De bonis et malis libris)*, a writer of their own, hath made a wanton experiment upon the Apoſtles creed; and, by a ſiniſter, but poſſible interpretation hath made every article of it hereſy and blaſphemy, on purpoſe to ſhew, that the plaineſt words are not free from ambiguity. But may be Mr. S. can outdo the Apoſtles, and can deliver the Chriſtian doctrine ſo clearly that he can demonſtrate it impoſſible for any man to put any other ſenſe upon any of his words than that which he intended. I do not know what may be done: but, if Mr. S. doth this, he muſt both amend his ſtyle, and his way of demonſtration.

Is Mr. S. ſufficiently aſſured, that there is ſuch a part of the world as America? and can he demonſtrate this to any man without carrying him thither? Can he ſhew by any neceſſary argument, that it is naturally impoſſible that all the relations concerning that place ſhould be falſe? When his demonſtrations have done their utmoſt, cannot "a ſearching and ſincere wit at leaſt maintain "his ground of ſuſpenſe with a Might it not be other "wiſe?" *p.* 27.; and with an Is it not poſſible, that all men may be liars, or that a company of travellers may have made uſe of their privilege, to abuſe the world by falſe reports, and to put a trick upon mankind? or that all thoſe who pretend to go thither, and bring their commodities from thence, may go to ſome other part of the world, and taking pleaſure in abuſing others in the ſame manner as they have been impoſed upon themſelves

themſelves, may ſay they have been at America? Who can tell but all this may be ſo? And yet I ſuppoſe, notwithſtanding the poſſibility of this, no man in his wits is now poſſeſſed with ſo incredible a folly as to doubt whether there be ſuch a place. The caſe is the very ſame as to the certainty of an ancient book, and of the ſenſe of plain expreſſions. We have no demonſtration for theſe things; and we expect none, becauſe we know the things are not capable of it. We are not infallibly certain, that any book is ſo ancient as it pretends to be, or that it was written by him whoſe name it bears, or that this is the ſenſe of ſuch and ſuch paſſages in it. It is poſſible all this may be otherwiſe; that is, it implies no contradiction: but we are very well aſſured that it is not; nor hath any prudent man any juſt cauſe to make the leaſt doubt of it. For a bare poſſibility, that a thing may be, or not be, is no juſt cauſe of doubting whether a thing be or not. It is poſſible all the people of France may die this night; but I hope the poſſibility of this doth not incline any man in the leaſt to think it will be ſo. It is poſſible the ſun may not riſe to-morrow morning; and yet, for all this, I ſuppoſe that no man hath the leaſt doubt but that it will.

§ 3. But becauſe this principle *viz.* "That in matters of religion a man cannot be reaſonably ſatisfied "with any thing leſs than that infallible aſſurance which "is wrought by demonſtration," is the main pillar of Mr. S.'s book; therefore, beſide what hath been already ſaid, to ſhew the unreaſonableneſs of this principle, I ſhall take a little pains to manifeſt to him, how much he is contradicted in this by the chief of his brethren of the tradition, *viz.* Mr. Ruſhworth, Dr. Holden, Mr. Creſſy, and Mr. White; who, beſides Mr. S. and one I. B. are, ſo far as I can learn, all the public patrons that ever this hypotheſis of oral tradition hath had in the world: and if Mr. White, as I have reaſon to believe, was the author of thoſe dialogues which paſs under Ruſhworth's name, the number of them is yet leſs. Now, if I can ſhew, that this principle, eſteemed by Mr. S. ſo fundamental to this hypotheſis, is plainly contradicted by the principal aſſerters of oral tradition, I ſhall hereby gain one of theſe two things; either that theſe great

patrons

patrons of oral tradition were ignorant of the true foundation of their own hypothesis, or that this principle is not necessary for the support of it. Not that I would be so understood as if I did deny, that these very persons do sometimes speak very big words of the necessity of infallibility. But if it be their pleasure to contradict themselves, as I have no reason to be displeased, so neither to be concerned for it; but shall leave it to Mr. S. to reconcile them first to themselves; and then, if he pleases, afterwards to himself.

§ 4. I begin with Mr. Rushworth, of immortal memory, for that noble attempt of his, to persuade the world, that, notwithstanding he was the first inventor of this hypothesis of oral tradition, yet he could prove, that the church had in all ages owned it, and proceeded upon it as her only rule of faith. He, in his third dialogue, § 3. and 4. when his nephew objects to him, "That perhaps "a Protestant would say, that all his foregoing discourse "was but probability and likelihood; and therefore, "to hazard a man's estate upon peradventures, were "something hard, and not very rationally done," replies thus to him: "What security do your merchants, "your statesmen, your soldiers, those that go to law, "nay, even those that till your grounds, and work for "their livings; what security, I say, do all these go "upon? Is it greater than the security which these "grounds afford? Surely no; and yet no man esteems "them foolish. All human affairs are hazardous, and "have some adventure in them: and therefore he who "requires evident certainty only in matters of religion, "discovers in himself a less mind to the goods promised in the next life, than to these which he seeks here "in this world upon weaker assurance. Howsoever, "the greatest evidence that can be to him that is not "capable of convincing demonstrations, which the "greatest part of mankind fall short of, is but conjectural." So that, according to Mr. Rushworth, it is not reason and discretion, but want of love to God and religion, which makes men require greater evidence for matters of religion than for human affairs; which yet, he tells us, "are hazardous, and have some adventure in them," and consequently are not capable of demonstration.

demonstration. Besides, if demonstrative evidence be an essential property of the rule of faith, as Mr. S. affirms, then this rule cannot, according to Mr. Rushworth, be of any use to the greatest part of mankind, because they are not capable of convincing demonstrations. Again, "do but consider (says he, *ibid* § 6.) 'how unequal and unjust a condition it is, that the 'claim of the present church shall not be heard, unless 'she can confute all the peradventures that wit may 'invent, and solve all the arguments which the infi- 'nite variety of time, place, and occasions, may have 'given way unto; and then you will see how unreason- 'able an adversary he is, who will not be content with 'any satisfaction but such as man's nature scarcely af- 'fords." And is it not equally unjust in Mr. S. not to let scripture's claim be heard, unless we can confute every peradventure and Might it not be otherwise, that wit may invent? See, then, how unreasonable an adversary Mr. S. is, who will not be content with any satisfaction but such as, according to Mr. Rushworth, man's nature scarcely affords.

Dr. Holden (I confess) states the matter somewhat cautiously, when he tells us, *l.* 1. *c.* 1. that "it shall 'suffice for the present to determine, that the wisdom 'of the Creator hath afforded us such an assurance, 'especially of truths necessary to salvation, as is suita- 'ble to our nature, and best fitted for the safe conduct 'of our lives in moral and religious affairs." But if we interpret these general expressions by the passages I before cited out of Mr. Rushworth, (as in reason we may, since the Doctor is beholden to him for the best part of his book) then nothing can make more against Mr. S.'s principle.

§ 5. Mr. Cressy, in his *Exomologesis*, *c.* 19. § 5. says, that "such teachers as approached nearest to the 'fountain of truth, Christ and his Apostles, had means 'of informing themselves in apostolical tradition in- 'comparably beyond us." Mr. S. may do well to shew what those means were, which are so incomparably beyond his infallibility and demonstration. The same author (*c.* 32. §. 4) does very much applaud Stapleton's determination of the question concerning the church's infallibility;

infallibility; which is as follows, "That the church does "not expect to be taught by God immediately by new "revelations, but makes use of several means, *&c.* as "being governed, not by Apostles, *&c.* but by ordi- "nary pastors and teachers: That these pastors, in ma- "king use of these several means of decision, proceed, "not as the Apostles did, with a peculiar infallible di- "rection of the Holy Spirit, but with a prudential col- "lection not always necessary: That to the Apostles, "who were the first masters of evangelical faith, and "founders of the church, such an infallible certitude "of means was necessary; not so now to the church, "*&c.*" If this be true, that an infallible certitude of means is not now necessary to the church, and that her pastors do now, in deciding matters of faith, proceed only with a prudent collection not always necessary; then it should seem, that a searching wit may maintain his ground of suspense, even against their church also, with a "Might it not be otherwise?" Again, Mr. Cressy tells us, (*Append. c.* 5.), that "truth, and our ob- "ligation to believe it, is in an higher degree in scrip- "ture than in the decisions of the church, as Bellar- "mine acknowledges:" which is to say, that we may have greater assurance of the truth of doctrines contain- ed in the scriptures, than we can have of any doctrine from the determination of the church. But if we have the greatest assurance that can be of truths delivered to us by the church, as Mr. S. affirms, then I would fain learn of him, what that higher degree of assurance is, which Mr. Bellarmine speaks of, and whether it be greater than the greatest? Not to insist upon that, (which yet I cannot but by the way take notice of) that Mr. Cressy, by his approbation of this determination of Bellarmine's, doth advance the scripture above the church, as to one of the most essential properties of the rule of faith, *viz.* the certainty of it.

But the most eminent testimony to my purpose in Mr. Cressy, is that famous passage (*c.* 40. § 3. *&c.*) which hath given so much offence to several of his own church, wherein he acknowledges "the unfortunateness (to him) "of the word *infallibility*;" and tells us, "that he "could find no such word in any council; that no ne- "cessity

neceſſity appeared to him, that either he, or any other Proteſtant, ſhould ever have heard that word named, and much leſs preſſed with ſo much earneſtneſs, as of late it has generally been in diſputations and books of controverſy: and that Mr. Chillingworth combats this word with too great ſucceſs; inſomuch that if this word were once forgotten, or but laid by, Mr. Chillingworth's arguments would loſe the greateſt part of their ſtrength; and that if this word were confined to the ſchools, where it was bred, there would be ſtill no inconvenience: and that, ſince by manifeſt experience the Engliſh Proteſtants think themſelves ſo ſecure, when they have leave to ſtand or fall by that word, and in very deed have ſo much to ſay for themſelves when they are preſſed unneceſſarily with it; ſince likewiſe it is a word capable of ſo high a ſenſe, that we cannot deviſe one more full and proper to attribute to God himſelf, *&c.*:" ſince all this is ſo, he thinks he cannot be "blamed, if ſuch reaſons move him to wiſh, that the Proteſtants may never be invited to combat the authority of the church under that notion." A very ingenuous acknowledgment, and as croſs to Mr. S.'s principle as any thing can be. But the word *infallibility* was not ſo unfortunate to Mr. Creſſy, as his untoward explication of the forecited paſſage *in his Appendix*; which he afterwards publiſhed, chiefly by way of vindication of himſelf, againſt the learned author of the preface to my Lord Falkland's *Diſcourſe of infallibility*. There (*Append.* § 2. & 3.) he tells us, that "there are ſeveral degrees of infallibility." And that we may know what degrees of infallibility he thinks neceſſary to be attributed to the church, this following paſſage will inform us: "Methinks (he ſays) if God had furniſhed his divine and ſupernatural truth with evidence equal to this, that the ſun will ſhine to-morrow, or that there will be a ſpring and harveſt next year, we are infinitely obliged to bleſs his providence; and juſtly condemned, if we refuſe to believe the leaſt of ſuch truths, as ſhewing leſs affection to ſave our ſouls, than the dull plowmen to ſow their corn, who certainly have far leſs evidence for their harveſt, than Catholics for their

" faith; and yet they insist not peevishly upon every
" capricious objection, nor exact an infallible security o
" a plentiful reaping next summer, but, notwithstanding
" all difficulties and contingencies, proceed chearfully in
" their painful husbandry." So that, according to thi
discourse, whatever degree of assurance the church hath
or can give to those who rely upon her, it is plain, tha
no further degree is necessary, than what the husband
man, when he sows, hath of a plentiful harvest; and tha
men are justly condemned, if they refuse to believe th
least truth upon such security, which yet, by his own
acknowledgment is liable to contingencies: nay far
ther, that men are not reasonable, but " peevish, i
" exacting infallible security, and insisting upon every
" capricious objection," such as is Mr. S.'s " Might i
" not be otherwise?" Now, as to this degree of assu
rance, or (as he calls it) infallibility, I cannot bu
grant what he says of it to be most true; *viz.* tha
" in a severe acceptation of the word, it is not rigo
" rously infallible; " that is, (as he explains it), it i
not absolutely impossible, nor does it imply a fla
contradiction, that the thing whereof we are so assure
may be otherwise: but then I utterly deny, that accor
ding to any true acceptation of this word, such a de
gree of assurance as he speaks of, can be called infalli
bility; and withal I affirm, that none of those severa
degrees of infallibility which he mentions, exceptin
that only which imports an absolute impossibility, ca
with any tolerable propriety of speech, or regard to th
true meaning and use of the word, have the name c
infallibility given to them. For infallibility can signif
nothing else but an utter impossibility that one shoul
be deceived in that matter as to which he is suppose
to be infallible; and to say such a thing is impossible, i
to say, that the existence of it implies a flat contradic
tion: so that, whosoever asserts degrees of infallibility
is obliged to shew, that there are degrees of absolut
impossibilities, and of perfect contradictions; and he ha
need of a very sharp and piercing wit, that is to fin
out degrees, where there neither are nor can be any
Indeed, in respect of the objects of knowledge, it is ea
sy to conceive how infallibility may be extended to mor

object

objects or fewer; but in respect of the degree of assurance, (of which Mr. Cressy speaks) it is altogether unimaginable how any one can be more or less out of all possibility of being deceived in those things wherein he is supposed to be infallible: for no one can be more removed from the possibility of being deceived, than he that is out of all possibility of being deceived; and whoever is less than this, is not infallible; because he only is so, who is out of all possibility of being deceived in those matters wherein he is supposed to be infallible. So that Mr. Cressy's lower degrees of infallibility are no degrees of that assurance which may properly be called infallible, (for that can have no degrees) but of that assurance which is less than infallible. And he needed not have raised all this dust about the degrees of infallibility, had it not been, that, by the means of such a cloud, he might make the more convenient escape out of that strait he was in between the clamour of his own church and the advantage which his adversaries made of his free and open discourse against infallibility. For any one that carefully reads his book, will find, that he understands nothing by the infallibility of the church, but "an authority of obliging all Christians to submit to her decisions;" which is no more, but what every supreme judge hath in civil matters, *viz.* a power to determine those controversies that lie before him as well as he can or will; and when that is done, every one is bound to submit to such determinations: but yet for all this, no man ever dreamed a supreme civil judge to be infallible more than another man. I do not now dispute the extent of the church's authority: but if she have no other infallibility, but what a full authority of decision does suppose, I am sure she hath none at all.

Before I leave Mr. Cressy, I cannot but take notice how unfortunate and disingenuous he is in explaining the meaning of these words of his own, *viz.* "Against this "word *infallibility* Mr. Chillingworth's book especially "combats, and this with too too great success;" which in his *Appendix*, *c.* 5. § 6. he interprets thus: "Success, I mean, not against the church, but against his "own soul, and the souls of his fellow English Protestants, *&c.*" As if one that had wished well to

" Cæsar, should have said, " that Pompey had fough
" against him with too too great success;" and being
afterwards challenged by Cæsar's party, as having said
that Pompey had conquered Cæsar, he should explain
himself thus: " Success, I mean, not against Cæsar, bu
" against his own life, and the life of his followers.'
Can any thing be finer than for any man to say, that by
Pompey's success in fighting against Cæsar, he means
that Cæsar had beaten Pompey? Which is no more than
if one should take the liberty to interpret white by black.

§ 6. Mr. White doth most expressly contradict this
principle of Mr. S's, in these following passages: In his
preface to Mr. Rushworth, he says, that " such a cer
" tainty as makes the cause always work the same ef
" fect, though it take not away the absolute possibility
" of working otherwise, ought absolutely to be reckon
" ed in the degree of true certainty; and that those au
" thors are mistaken who undervalue it." So that it
seems Mr. S. is mistaken in affirming, that a man can
not be certain of any thing so long as there is any pos
sibility that it may be otherwise. In his answer to my
Lord Falkland, he says, *p.* 14. 15. that " in mora
" matters, and such as are subject to human action, we
" must expect such assurance as human actions bear
" If for the government of your spiritual life, you have
" as much as for the management of your natural and
" civil life, what can you expect more? Two or three
" witnesses of men beyond exception will cast a man ou
" of, not only his lands, but life, and all. He that a
" mong merchants will not adventure where there is
" hundred to one gaining, will be accounted a silly
" factor; and among soldiers, he that will fear dange
" where but one of a hundred is slain, shall not escape
" the stain of cowardice. What then shall we expect in
" religion, but to see a main advantage on the one side
" which we may rest ourselves on; and for the rest
" remember we are men subject to chance and mutabi
" lity; and thank God he hath given us that assurance
" in a supernatural way, which we are contented witha
" in our civil ventures and possessions; which, neverthe-
" less, God knoweth we often love better, and would
" hazard less than the unknown good of the life to
" come?"

'come?" Again, *p.* 30. "If God Almighty hath in all 'sorts and manners provided his church, that she may 'enlighten every man in his way that goeth the way of 'a man; then let every man consider which is the fit 'way for himself, and what in other matters of that 'way he accounteth evidence. And if there be no in-'terest in his soul to make him loth to believe what in 'another matter of the like nature he doth not stick at, 'or heavy to practise what he sees clearly enough, I 'fear not his choice." Once more, directing a man in his search after rational satisfaction in matters of religion, he hath this passage, *p.* 46. "Besides this, he must have this care, that he seek what the nature of the subject can yield; and not as those physicians, who, when they have promised no less than immortality, can at last only reach to some conservation of health or youth in some small degree: so I could wish the author to well assure himself, first that there is possibly an infallibility, before he be too earnest to be contented with nothing less. For what if human nature should not be capable of so great a good? Would he therefore think it fitting to live without any religion, because he could not get such a one as himself desired, though with more than a man's wish? Were it not rational to see, whether, among religions, some one have not such notable advantages over the rest, as in reason it might seem human nature might be contented withal? Let him cast his account with the dearest things he hath, his own or friends lives, his estate, his hope of posterity, and see upon what terms of advantage he is ready to venture all these; and then return to religion, and see whether, if he do not venture his soul upon the like, if it be truly reason, or some other not confessed motive, which withdraws him. For my own part, as I doubt not of an infallibility, so I doubt not but, setting that aside, there be those excellencies found on the Catholic party which may force a man to prefer it, and to venture all he hath upon it, before all other religions and sects in the world. Why then may not one who, after long searching, findeth no infallibility, rest himself on the like, supposing man's nature affords no better?"

Are not these fair concessions, which the evidence and force of truth have extorted from these authors? so that it seems that that which Mr. S. calls *a civil piece of Antheistry*, (*Letter to his answerer*, *p.* 5.) is advanced in most express words by his best friends; and therefore I hope he will (as he threatens me) "be smart with them "in opposition to so damnable and fundamental an error." And whenever he attempts this, I would entreat him to remember, that he hath these two things to prove, 1. That no evidence but demonstration can give a man sufficient assurance of any thing. 2. That a bare possibility that a thing may be otherwise, is a rational cause of doubting, and a wise ground of suspense. Which when he hath proved, I shall not grudge him his infallibility.

Sect. V. *That scripture is sufficient to convince the most acute adversaries, and that is sufficiently certain.*

§ 1. THE last part of this third discourse endeavours to shew, "That the scripture is not convicting "of the most obstinate and acute adversaries." As for the obstinate, he knows my mind already. Let us see why the most acute adversary may not be convinced by scripture. "Because, (as he objects, *p.* 28.) 1. We can "not be certain that this book is God's word, because "of the many strange absurdities and heresies in the "pen letter as it lies; as that God hath hands and "feet, *&c.* and because of the contradictions in it." To which I have already returned an answer "2. Because "(as he saith, *p.* 31.) we cannot be certain of the true "of the letter in any particular text, that it was not "foisted in, or some way altered in its significativeness "and if it be a negative proposition, that the particle "*not* was not inserted; if affirmative, not left out." And if we pretend to be certain of this, he demands our demonstration for it, *p.* 31. But how unreasonable this demand is, I hope I have sufficiently shewn. And to shew it yet farther, I ask him, How their church knows that the particle *not* was not left out of any text in which it is not found in their copies? I know he hath a ready answer, *viz.* by oral tradition. But this (according to him

him, *p.* 116.) only reaches to "scripture's letter, so far "as it is coincident with the main body of Christian "doctrine;" concerning the rest of scripture it is impossible (according to his own principles) that they should have any security that the particle *not* was not unduly inserted, or left out, by the transcribers. Nay, as to those texts of scripture which fall in with the main body of Christian doctrine, I demand his demonstration, that the particle *not* was not unduly inserted or left out, not only in those texts, but also in the oral tradition of the doctrines coincident with the sense of those texts. If he say, it was impossible any age should conspire to leave out or insert the particle *not* in the oral tradition; so say I it was that they should conspire to leave it out of the written text: but then I differ from him thus far, that I do not think this naturally impossible, so as that it can rigorously be demonstrated; but only morally impossible, so that no body hath any reason to doubt of it; which, to a prudent man is as good as a demonstration. Pyrrho himself never advanced any principle of scepticism beyond this, *viz.* That men ought to question the credit of all books, concerning which they cannot demonstrate as to every sentence in them, that the particle *not* was not inserted, if it be affirmative; or left out, if it be negative. If so much be required to free a man from reasonable doubting concerning a book, how happy are they that have attained to infallibility? What he saith (*p.* 32.) concerning the *variæ lectiones* of scripture, hath already had a sufficient answer.

§ 2. In his fourth discourse he endeavours to shew, (*p.* 33.) that "the scripture is not certain in itself; and "consequently, not ascertained to us." *ibi*, "Not "certain, materially considered, as consisting of such "and such characters; because books are liable to be "burnt, torn, blotted, worn out," *p.* 34. We grant it is not impossible but that any, or all the books in the world may be burnt: but then we say likewise, that a book so universally dispersed, may easily be preserved; tho' we have no assurance that God will preserve it, in case all men should be so foolish or so careless as to endeavour to suffer the abolition of it. But it seems the scriptures cannot be a rule of faith, if they be liable to any

any external accidents: and this he tells us, (*p.* 34.) "Though it may seem a remote and impertinent exception, yet to one who considers the wise dispositions of divine providence, it will deserve a deep consideration; because the salvation of mankind being the end of God's making nature, the means to it should be more settled, strong and unalterable, than any other piece of nature whatever." But, notwithstanding this wise reason, this exception still seems to me both remote and impertinent: for if this which he calls a reason be a truth, it will from thence necessarily follow, not only that the doctrine of Christ must be conveyed by such a means as is more unalterable than the course of nature; but also, by a clear parity of reason, that all the means of our salvation do operate towards the accomplishing of their end with greater certainty than the fire burns, or the sun shines; which they can never do, unless they operate more necessarily than any natural causes. How they can do so upon voluntary agents, I desire Mr. S. to inform me.

§ 3. He proceeds by a long harangue to shew, *p.* 34. that "not only these material characters in themselves are corruptible, but in complection with the causes actually laid in the world to preserve them entire; because either those causes are material, and then they are also liable to continual alterations; or spiritual, that is, the minds of men, and from these we may with good reason hope for a greater degree of constancy than from any other piece of nature:" which, by the way, is a very strange paradox, that the actions of voluntary agents have a greater certainty and constancy in them than those of natural agents; of which the fall of angels and men, compared with the continuance of the sun and stars in their first state, is a very good evidence.

§ 4. But he adds a caution, *p.* 35. that "that they perfectly unalterable from their nature, and unerrable, if due circumstances be observed; that is, if due proposals be made to beget certain knowledge, and due care used to attend to such proposals." But who can warrant, that due proposals will always be made to men, and due care used by them? If these be uncertain, where

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is the constancy and unerrableness he talks so much of? So that notwithstanding the constancy of this spiritual cause, the mind of man, of preserving scriptures entire; yet, in order to this, (as he tells us, *p.* 36.) "so many "actions are to be done, which are compounded and "made up of an innumerable multitude of several par- "ticuliarities to be observed, every of which may be "mistaken apart, each being a distinct little action in "its single self; such as is the transcribing of a whole "book, consisting of such myriads of words, single let- "ters, and titles or stops; and the several actions of "writing over each of these so short and cursory, that it "prevents diligence, and exceeds human care, to keep "awake, and apply distinct attentions to every of these "distinct actions." Mr. Rushworth much undoes Mr. S. in these minute cavils; for he tells us, (*Dial.* 2. § 7.) that "supposing an original copy of Christ's words, "written by one of the Evangelists in the same lan- "guage, let him have set down every word and syl- "lable; yet men conversant in noting the changes of "meanings in words, will tell us, that divers accents "in the pronunciation of them, the turning of the speak- "er's head or body this or that way, &c. may so change "the sense of the words, that they will seem quite dif- "ferent in writing from what they were in speaking." I hope that oral and practical tradition hath been care- ful to preserve all these circumstances, and hath deliver- ed down Christ's doctrine, with all the right traditionary accents, nods, and gestures, necessary for the understand- of it; otherwise the omission of these may have so alter- ed the sense of it, that it may be now quite different from what it was at first. But to answer Mr. S. we do not pretend to be assured that it is naturally impossible that the scriptures should have been corrupted or chang- ed, but only to be sufficiently assured that they have not received any material alteration, from as good argu- ments as the nature of the subject will bear. But if his reason had not been very short and cursory, he might easily have reflected that oral tradition is equally liable to all these contingencies: for it doth as much "pre- "vent diligence, and exceed human care, to keep awake, "and apply distinct attentions to the distinct actions of "speak-

" ſpeaking, as of writing." And I hope he will not deny, that a doctrine orally delivered conſiſts of words, and letters, and accents, and ſtops, as well as a doctrine written; and that the ſeveral actions of ſpeaking are as ſhort and curſory as of writing.

§ 5. 2*dly*, He tells us, *p.* 38. " Scripture, formally " conſidered as to its ſignificativeneſs, is alſo uncer- " tain:" 1. " Becauſe of the uncertainty of the letter," *ibid.* This is already anſwered. 2. " Becauſe the certain " ſenſe of it is not to be arrived to by the vulgar, who " are deſtitute of languages and arts," *ib.* True, where men are not permitted to have the ſcriptures in their own language, and underſtand no other: but where they are allowed the ſcriptures tranſlated into their own language, they may underſtand them; all neceſſary points of faith and practice being ſufficiently plain in any tranſlation of the Bible that I know of. And that eminent wits cannot agree about the ſenſe of texts which concern the main points of faith, *p.* 38. hath been ſpoken to already.

§ 6. As for the reverence he pretends to ſcripture in the concluſion of his fourth diſcourſe, he might have ſpared that, after all the raillery and rudeneſs he hath uſed againſt it. It is eaſy to conjecture, both from his principles and his uncivil expreſſions concerning them, what his eſteem is of thoſe ſacred oracles. Probably it was requiſite in prudence to caſt in a few good words concerning the ſcriptures, for the ſake of the more tender and ſqueamiſh novices of their religion; or, (as Mr. Ruſhworth's nephew ſays frankly and openly, *Dial.* 2. § 14.) " for the ſatisfaction of indifferent men, that have " been brought up in this verbal and apparent reſpect of " the ſcripture;" who it ſeems are not yet attained to that degree of Catholic piety and fortitude, as to endure patiently, that the word of God ſhould be reviled or ſlighted. Beſides, that in reference to thoſe whom they hope hereafter to convert, (who might be too much alienated from their religion, if he had expreſſed nothing but contempt towards a book which Proteſtants and Chriſtians in all ages, till the very dregs of Popery, have been bred up to a high veneration of,) it was not much amiſs to paſs this formal compliment upon the Bible; which the wiſe of his own religion will eaſily underſtand, and

and may ſerve to catch the reſt. But let him not deceive himſelf, *God is not mocked.*

Sect. VI. *That the Properties of a rule of faith do not belong to oral tradition.*

§ 1. SEcondly, He comes to ſhew, *p.* 41. " that the " properties of a rule of faith belong to oral " tradition." And, firſt, he gives a tedious explanation of the nature of this oral practical tradition; which amounts to this, that as, in reference to the civil education of children, " they are taught their own and o- " thers names, to write and read, and exerciſe their " trades;" ſo, in reference to religion, " the children " of Chriſtians firſt hear ſounds; afterwards, by de- " grees, get dim notions of God, Chriſt, Saviour, hea- " ven, hell, virtue, vice, and by degrees practiſe what " they have heard; they are ſhewn to ſay grace, and " their prayers, to hold up their hands, or perhaps eyes, " and to kneel, and other poſtures. Afterwards they " are acquainted with the creed, ten commandments, " and ſacraments, ſome common forms of prayer, and " other practices of Chriſtianity; and are directed to " order their lives accordingly; and are guided in all " this by the actions and carriage of the elder faith- " ful. And this goes on by inſenſible degrees, not by " leaps from a hundred years to a hundred, but from " month to month, and even leſs." If this be all that tradition doth, this is nothing but what is done among Proteſtants, and that with greater advantage; becauſe we always teach children to ſay their prayers in a known tongue, ſo as they may underſtand them. And we alſo teach them the creed, and ten commandments, and the ſacraments, ſo many as Chriſt hath inſtituted, and no more. So that if this be ſo infallible a way of conveying the doctrine of Chriſtianity, we have it among us. And we do over and beſides inſtruct them in the ſcriptures, which are the authentic inſtrument whereby Chriſt's doctrine is conveyed to us. But then we do not ſuppoſe, as his hypotheſis neceſſarily inforceth him to do, that the Chriſtian doctrine is equally taught and learned by all; but by ſome more, by others

others less perfectly, according to the different abilities and diligence of parents and teachers, and the various capacities and dispositions of children: whereas his hypothesis falls, if all, or at least the generality of parents do not instruct their children in the like exactness, and if the generality of children do not receive this doctrine in the same perfection that it is delivered. For if it be taught or received with any variation, it must necessarily be so conveyed; and these variations will grow daily. I had thought he would have told us how all parents do teach their children the whole body of Christ's doctrine, and explain to them every part of it in a hundred or a thousand several expressions signifying the same sense; and not have instanced in two set forms, such as the creed, and ten commandments; for, according to Mr. White, (*Apology*, *p.* 81.) "that cannot be a traditi-"on which is delivered down in set words."

§ 2. Having thus explained oral tradition, he comes to shew, that the properties of a rule of faith agree to it. I have already shewed, that the true properties of a rule of faith are but two, *viz.* "That it be plain and intel-"lible; and, That it be sufficiently certain." The first of these, that oral tradition may deliver a doctrine plainly and intelligibly, I grant him. All the difficulty is about the second property, whether we have sufficient assurance that the doctrine delivered down by oral tradition, hath received no corruption or change in its conveyance? And all that he pretends to prove in this discourse is, That if this rule had been followed and kept to all along, the Christian doctrine neither hath, nor can have received any change; that is, if the next age after the Apostles did truly, and without any alteration, deliver the Christian doctrine to their immediate successors, and they to their heirs, and so on; then, upon this supposition, the doctrine of the present traditionary church must be the very same with that which was delivered to the Apostles. All this is readily granted to him. But that this rule hath always been followed, nay, that it is impossible there should have been any deviation from it, as he pretends, this we deny, not only as untrue, but as one of the most absurd propositions that ever yet pretended to demonstrative evidence.

PART

PART III.

In which Mr. S.'s demonstrations and corollaries are examined.

SECT. I. *Considerations touching his demonstrations in general.*

§ 1. BEfore I come to speak particularly to his demonstrations, I shall premise these two considerations: 1. That, according to the principles of the patrons of tradition, no man can, by his private reason, certainly find out the true rule of faith. 2. That, according to Mr. S. the way of demonstration is no certain way to find out the rule of faith. If either of these be made out, his demonstrations lose all their force. If the first be made good, then he cannot demonstrate the infallibility of tradition, nor, consequently, that that is the rule of faith. If the second, then the way of demonstration, which he pretends to take, signifies nothing.

§ 2. *1st*, No man can, according to the principles of the patrons of tradition, by his private reason, certainly find out what is the rule of faith. Suppose a Heathen to be desirous to inform himself of the Christian faith; in order to which, he is inquisitive after some rule by which he may take a measure of it, and come certainly to know what it is: he inquires of Christians what their rule is, and finds them divided about it; some saying, that the scripture, others, that oral tradition, is the rule. In this case, it is not possible, without a revelation, for this man to find out the rule of faith, but by his own private reason examining and weighing the arguments and pretences of both sides. And when he hath done this, unless he can by his reason demonstrate, that the one is a certain and infallible rule, and the other not so, he hath not (according to Mr. S.) found out the rule of faith. But reason can never do this, according to Mr. S. For, speaking of demonstrating the certainty of tradition, he tells us, *p.* 53. that "tradition hath

" for its basis man's nature; not according to his intel-
" lectuals, which do but darkly grope in the pursuit of
" science, *&c.*" And again, speaking how reason brings men to the rule of faith, he uses this comparison, (*Append. 2. p.* 183.) " She is like a dim-sighted man, who
" used his reason, to find a trusty friend to lead him in
" the twilight, and then relied on his guidance ratio-
" nally, without using his own reason at all, about the
" way itself." So that, according to him, the certainty of tradition cannot be founded on demonstration, because it is not founded in the intellectual part of man, which only can demonstrate. Besides, if it were founded in the intellectual part, yet that can never be able to demonstrate the certainty of tradition; because that faculty, which is dim-sighted, and does but grope darkly in the pursuit of science, is uncapable of framing demonstrations. Nor can any man understand how dim-sighted reason should see clearly to chuse its guide any more than its way; especially if it be considered, what a pretty contradiction it is, to say, that reason, as it is dim-sighted, can see clearly.

But Mr. Cressy is not contented to call every man's reason *dim-sighted*; he ventures a step farther, and call it *hood-winked* and *blind:* for he tells us, (*Append. c.* 6 § 8.) that " private reason is apparently a most fallible
" guide." And he pities my Lord Falkland's case; because, in the search of the true religion, he did " betake
" himself to the casual conduct of blind, human, natural
" reason," (*ibid.* § 9.) which afterwards (§ 11) he calls
" a guide that two persons cannot possibly follow toge-
" ther; because no two persons that ever followed any
" other guide beside authority, did or could think all
" things to be reasonable that all others thought so
" and, by consequence, such a guide, that, as long as
" he continues in that office, there cannot possibly be
" any church any where: which (says he) is an infalli-
" ble eviction, that this is an imaginary seducing guide
" since it is impossible, that that should be a guide ap-
" pointed for any Christian, which neither Christ nor
" his Apostles, nor any of their followers, ever mention-
" ed; yea, which formally destroys one of our twelve arti-
" cles of the Apostles creed, *viz. I believe the Holy Catholi-*
" *church.*"

" *church.*" Thus he does by reason clearly and infallibly evince, that reason cannot be otherwise than a most blind and fallible guide. This it is to talk of things when a man looks only upon one side of them; as if because reason has a blind side, and is uncertain in some things, therefore we ought to conclude her universally blind, and uncertain in every thing; and as if because all men cannot think all things reasonable which any one man thinks to be so, therefore it is to be doubted whether those common principles of reason be true which mankind are generally agreed in. And that Mr. Cressy speaks here of the use of our private reason in the finding out of our rule, is clear from what he says in the next section, *viz.* that " this hood-winked guide (inquiring " into scripture, and searching after tradition) may pos- " sibly stumble upon the way to unity and truth; that " is, the true Catholic Church." If this be true, why does Mr. S. pretend, that he can by reason demonstrate the infallibility of tradition, and by this hood-wink'd guide lead men to the true rule of faith? And what a pitiful encouragement would this be to an inquisitive philosopher, who knowing no other guide but his reason whereby to find out whether scripture or tradition be the rule, to tell him, that, by the help of this hood-winked guide, he might possibly stumble upon the right?

A man may justly stand amazed at the inconsistency of these mens discourses and principles. In one mood they are all for demonstration, and for convincing men in the way of perfect science, which is the true rule of faith. But then, again, when another fit takes them, there is no such thing as science. Human reason grows all on the sudden dim-sighted, and at the next word is struck stark blind; and then the very utmost that it can do towards the bringing of an unprejudiced and inquisitive person to the true rule of faith, is, to leave him in a possibility of stumbling upon it: but if he be a heretic that makes use of private reason for his guide, then " it " is impossible, but that he with his blind guide should " fall into the pit," (*Append.* c. 7. § 8.) I cannot, for my part, imagine how they can reconcile the blindness of human reason with all that noise which they make about science and demonstration: but this I must con-

fess, that these kind of discourses which I meet with in Mr. S. and Mr. Cressy, are very proper arguments to persuade a man of the blindness of human reason. And indeed there is one passage in Mr. Cressy which gives me very great satisfaction concerning these matters; where he tells us, *ibid.* that "the wit and judgment of Catholics is, to renounce their own judgment, and depose their "own wit." Now, he that professes to have done this, may write contradictions, and no body ought to challenge him for it. However, it is a very ingenuous acknowledgment, that, when he forsook our church, and turned Papist, he laid aside his judgment and wit; which is just such an heroic act of judgment, as if a man, in a bravery, to shew his liberty, should sell himself for a slave. I am glad to understand, from an experienced person, what charges a man must be at when he turns Roman Catholic, namely, that whoever will embrace that religion, must forfeit his reason.

§ 3. *2dly*, The way of demonstration is, according to Mr. S. no certain way to find out the rule of faith. In his fourth *Appendix* against my Lord of Down, *p.* 253. 254. one of the eight mines, as he calls them, which he lays to blow up my Lord's dissuasive against Popery, is this: "That the method he takes in dissuading, cannot "be held in reason to have power to dissuade, unless it "be proper to that effect; that is, not common to that "effect and a contrary one. Now, that being most evidently no method or way to such an effect, which many follow and take, yet arrive not at that effect, it is "plain to common sense, that my Lord of Down miscalls his book a dissuasive; and that it can have in it "no power of moving the understanding one way or other, unless he can first vouch some particularity in the "method he takes, above what is in others, in which we "experience miscarriage, &c." If this be true, then his method of demonstration is no way to make men certain of what he pretends to demonstrate; because that is "most evidently no way to an effect which many follow and take, yet arrive not at that effect;" so that "it "is plain to common sense, that Mr. S.'s demonstrations "can have in them no power of moving the understanding one way or other, unless he can vouch "some

' some particularity in the demonstrations he pretends
' to bring, above what is in other pretended demon-
' strations, in which we experience miscarriage." Do not Thomas and Scotus (as Mr. White tells, *Exetasis*, p. 24.) all along pretend to demonstrate? and yet it is generally believed, that, at least where they contradict one another, one of them failed in his demonstrations. Did not Mr. Charles Thynne pretend to have demonstrated, that a man at one jump might leap from London to Rome? and yet I do not think any one was ever satisfied with his demonstration. And Mr. S. knows one in the world, whom I will not name, because he hath since ingeniously acknowledged his error, who thought he had demonstrated the quadrature of the circle; and was so confident of it, as to venture the reputation of his demonstrations in divinity upon it; and some of those divinity-demonstrations were the very same with Mr. S.'s. Since therefore the world hath experienced so much miscarriage in the way of demonstration, before Mr. S.'s demonstrations can be allowed to signify any thing, he must, according to his own law, vouch some particularity in his way and method of demonstration above what is in other mens. He hath not any where, that I remember, told us what that particularity is, wherein his way of demonstration is above other mens: nor can I, upon the most diligent search, find any peculiar advantage that his way has, more than theirs above mentioned; unless this be one, that he pretends to demonstrate a self evident principle, and herein I think he hath plainly the advantage of Mr. Charles Thynne; and unless this may be counted another advantage, that he has so extraordinary a confidence and conceit of his own demonstrations; and in this particular, I must acknowledge, that he clearly excells all that have gone before him. In all other things his way of demonstration is but like his neighbours.

SECT. II. *Mr. S.'s demonstration à priori.*

§ 1. I Come now to examine his demonstrations of this self-evident principle, (as he often calls it,) That oral tradition is a certain and infallible way of convey-

ing Christ's doctrine from one age to another, without any corruption or change; which is to say, that it is impossible but that this rule should always have been kept to. That this is not a self-evident principle, need no other evidence, than that he goes about to demonstrate it. But yet, notwithstanding this, I think he has as much reason to call this a self-evident principle, as to call his proofs of it demonstrations.

§ 2. In order to his demonstration *à priori*, he lays these four grounds, which I shall set down in his own words, *p.* 59, 60. "1. That Christian doctrine was at "first unanimously settled by the Apostles, in the hearts "of the faithful, dispersed in great multitudes over several parts of the world. 2. That this doctrine was "firmly believed by all those faithful, to be the way to "heaven; and the contradicting or deserting it, to be "the way to damnation: so that the greatest hopes "and fears imaginable were, by engaging the divine "authority, strongly applied to the minds of the first "believers, encouraging them to the adhering to the "doctrine, and deterring them from relinquishing it "and indeed infinitely greater than any other whatsoever, springing from any temporal consideration: and "that this was in all ages the persuasion of the faithful. 3. That hopes of good, and fears of harm "strongly applied, are the causes of actual will. 4. That "the thing was feasible, or within their power: that "what they were bred to, was knowable by them. That "put, it follows as certainly, that a great number of "body of the first believers, and after faithful in each "age, that is, from age to age, would continue to hold "themselves, and teach their children as themselves had "been taught, that is, would follow and stick to tradition; as it doth, that a cause, put actually causing "produceth its effect." This is his demonstration, with the grounds of it.

§ 3. To shew the vanity and weakness of this pretended demonstration, I shall assail it these three ways; by shewing, 1. That if the grounds of it were true, they would conclude too much, and prove that to be impossible, which common experience evinceth, and himself must grant to have been. 2. That his main ground

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are apparently false. 3. That his demonstration is confuted by clear and undeniable instances to the contrary.

Sect. III. *The first answer to his demonstration.*

§ 1. IF the grounds of it were true, they would conclude too much, and prove that to be impossible, which common experience evinceth, and himself must grant to have been. For if these two principles be true, "That the greatest hopes and fears are strongly applied "to the minds of all Christians," and, "That those "hopes and fears strongly applied, are the cause of ac-"tual will to adhere constantly to Christ's doctrine," then from hence it follows, that none that entertain this doctrine can ever fall from it; because falling from it is inconsistent with an actual will of adhering constantly to it. For supposing (as he doth) certain and constant causes of actual will to adhere to this doctrine, those who entertain it, must actually will to adhere to it; because "a cause put actually causing, produceth its effect;" which is constant adherence to it. And if this were true, these two things would be impossible: 1. That any Christian should turn apostate or heretic; 2. That any Christian should live wickedly; both which not only frequent and undoubted experience doth evince, but himself must grant *de facto* to have been.

§ 2. *First*, It would be impossible that any Christian should turn apostate or heretic. Heresy, according to him, is nothing else but the renouncing of tradition. Now he tells us, *p.* 60, that "the first renouncers of "tradition must have been true believers, or holders of "it ere they renounced it;" and I suppose there is the same reason for apostates. But if all Christians, or true believers (as he calls them) have these arguments of hope and fear strongly applied, and hope and fear strongly applied be the causes of actual will to adhere to this doctrine; it is necessary all Christians should adhere to it, and impossible there should be either apostates or heretics. For if these causes be put in "all the faithful "actually causing," (as the grounds of his demonstration suppose,) and "indirectibleness be the proper and "necessary effect of these causes," as he also saith, *p.* 75: then

then it is impossible, that where these causes are put, there should be any defection: for a proper and necessary effect cannot but be where the causes of such an effect are put, especially if they be put actually causing; and consequently it is impossible that any single Christian should ever either totally apostatize, or fall into heresy; that is, renounce tradition.

§ 3. And that this is a genuine consequence from these principles, (though he will not acknowledge it here, because he saw it would ruin his demonstration,) is liberally acknowledged by him in other parts of his discourse. For he tells us, *p.* 54. 78. 89. that "it exceeds all the power of nature, (abstracting from the "cases of madness, and violent disease,) to blot the "knowledge of this doctrine out of the soul of one "single believer;" and that "since no man can hold "contrary to his knowledge, nor doubt of what he "holds, nor change and innovate without knowing he "doth so, it is a manifest impossibility a whole age "should fall into an absurdity so inconsistent with the "nature of one single man;" and that "it is perhaps "impossible for one single man to attempt to deceive "posterity by renouncing tradition." Which passages laid together, amount to thus much, that it is impossible that tradition should fail in any one single person. And though in the passage last cited he speaks faintly, and with a *perhaps*, as if he apprended some danger in speaking too peremptorily; yet any one would easily see the last to be as impossible as any of the rest. And he himself elsewhere, being in the full career of his bombast rhetoric, delivers it roundly without fear or wit, *p.* 54. "Sooner may the sinews of entire nature by overstraining crack, and she lose all her activity and motion, "that is, herself, than one single part of that innumerable multitude, which integrate that vast testification "which we call tradition, can possibly be violated."

§ 4. But it may be we deal too hardly with him, and press his demonstration too far, because he tells us he only intends by it to prove, that the generality of Christians will always adhere to tradition. But if he intended to prove no more but this, he should then have brought a demonstration that would have concluded no more;

more; but this concludes of all as well as of the generality of Christians. A clear evidence that it is no demonstration, because it concludes that which is evidently false, that there can be no apostates or heretics. Besides, supposing his demonstration to conclude only, that the generality of Christians would always adhere to tradition, this is as plainly confuted by experience, if there be any credit to be given to history. St. Hierom tells us, (*Chron. ad annum Christ.* 352.) that "Liberius, Bishop "of Rome, (for all his particular title to infallibility "built upon tradition, as Mr. S. speaks, *corol.* 28.) "turned Arian;" and that "Arianism was established "by the synod of Ariminum;" which was a council more general than that of Trent (*ibid. ad an.* 363) and that "almost all the churches in the whole world, un-"der the names of peace and of the Emperor, were pol-"luted by communion with the Arians," (*ibid. ad an.* 364.) Again, that "under the Emperor Constantius "(Eusebius and Hippatius being Consuls) infidelity was "subscribed under the names of unity and faith," (*ibid. adverf. Lucifer.*); and "that the whole world groaned, "and wondered to see itself turned Arian," (*ibid.*) And he uses this as an argument to the Luciferians, to receive into the church those who had been defiled with the heresy of Arius, because the number of those who had kept themselves orthodox was exceeding small: "For (says he, *ibid.*) the synod of Nice, which consist-"ed of above three hundred Bishops, received eight A-"rian bishops, whom they might have cast out without "any great loss to the church. I wonder, then, how "some, and those the followers of the Nicene faith, "can think, that three confessors (*viz.* Athanasius, "Hilarius, Eusebius) ought not to do that, in case of "necessity, for the good and safety of the whole world, "which so many and so excellent persons did voluntа-"rily." It seems Arianism had prevailed very far, when St. Hierom could not name above three eminent persons in the church who had preserved themselves untainted with it. Again, "Arius in Alexandria was at "first but one spark; but, because it was not presently "extinguished, it broke out into a flame, which de-"voured the whole world," (*In epist. ad Galat. l.* 3.)

Gregory

Gregory Nazianzen *(Orat.* 20. & 21.) likewise tells us to the same purpose, that "the Arian heresy seized "upon the greatest part of the church." And, to shew that he knew nothing of Mr. S.'s demonstration of the indefectibility of the generality of Christians, he asks, *(Orat.* 25.) "Where are those that define the church "by multitude, and despise the little flock? *&c.*" And this heresy was of a long continuance; for from its rise, which happened in the 20th year of Constantine, it continued, as Joh. Abbas *(Chron. ad annum octavum Maurit.)* hath calculated it, 266 years. And the Pelagian heresy, if we may believe Bradwardine, one of the great champions of the church against it, did in a manner prevail as much as Arianism; as the said author complains, in his preface to his book, *Causa Dei*, that "almost the "whole world was run after Pelagius into error." Will Mr. S. now say, that, in the height of these heresies, "the generality of Christians did firmly adhere to "tradition?" If he say they did, let him answer the express testimonies produced to the contrary: but if they did not, then his demonstration also fails as to the generality of Christians. And if the greater part of Christians may fall off from tradition, what demonstration can make it impossible for the lesser to do so? Who will say it is in reason impossible, that a thousand persons should relinquish tradition, though nine hundred of them have already done it, and though the remainder be no otherwise secured from doing so, than those were who have actually relinquished it? Now, is not this a clear evidence, that this which he calls a demonstration *à priori*, is no such thing? because every demonstration *à priori* must be from causes which are necessary; whereas his demonstration is from voluntary causes. So that unless he can prove, that voluntary causes are necessary, he shall never demonstrate, that it is impossible for the generality of any company of men to err, who have every one of them free will, and are every one of them liable to passion and mistake.

§ 5. From all this it appears, that his whole discourse about the original and progress of heresy, and the multitudes of heretics in several ages, is as clear a confutation of his own demonstration as can be desired. The only

only thing that he offers in that discourse to prevent this objection which he foresaw it liable to is this: "It is not "(says he, *p.* 65.) to be expected, but that some contingencies should have place, where a whole species "in a manner, is to be wrought upon. It sufficeth, that "the causes to preserve faith indeficiently entire, are as "efficacious as those which are laid for the preservation of mankind; the virtue of faith not being to continue longer than mankind, its only object, does. And "they will easily appear as efficacious as the other, if "we consider the strength of those causes before explicated, and reflect, that they are effectively powerful "to make multitudes daily debar themselves of those "pleasures which are the causes of mankind's propagation: and, if we look into history for experience of "what hath passed in the world since the propagating "of Christianity, we shall find more particulars failing "in propagating their kind than their faith." To which I answer,

1st, That it may reasonably be expected there should be no contingencies in any particulars where causes of actual will are supposed to be put in all; "because (as "he says truly) a cause put actually causing, cannot but "produce its effect." Suppose, then, constant causes laid in all mankind, of an actual will to speak truth, to the best of their knowledge, were it not reasonable to expect, that there would be no such contingency to the world's end, as that any man should tell a lie? Nay, it were madness for any man to think any such contingency should be, supposing causes actually causing men always to speak truth.

2dly, It is far from truth, "that the causes to preserve "faith indeficiently entire, are as efficacious as those "which are laid for the propagation of mankind." And whereas he would prove the strength of those causes which are laid to preserve faith, because they are "effectively powerful to make multitudes daily debar "themselves of those pleasures which are the causes of "mankind's propagation;" I hope no body that hath read the innumerable complaints which occur in their own historians, and others of the best and most credible of their own writers, of more than one age, concerning the

the general viciousness and debauchery of their priests and monks, which will be over-forward to believe, that all those who debar themselves of lawful marriage, do abstain from those unlawful pleasures.

§ 6. But nothing can be more impudent than what he adds, that "if we look into histories for experience of "what hath passed in the world since the first planting of "Christianity, we shall find far more particulars failing "in propagating their kind than their faith." Do any histories confirm it to have been the experience of the world, that the far greatest part of the world did in any age give over propagating their kind? But histories do confirm, that the far greatest part of the Christian world did fall off to Arianism and Pelagianism; and consequently, as he supposeth, did desert and renounce tradition. Did ever whole nations and vast territories of the world either wholly, or for the far greatest part of them, take up an humour against propagating mankind? and yet both history, and the experience of the present age, assures us, that a great part of Asia and of Afric, where the most flourishing churches in the world once were, are fallen off from Christianity, and become either Mahometans or Heathens. In Afric almost all those vast regions which Christianity had gained from Heathenism, Mahometanism hath regained from Christianity. All the north part of Afric, lying along the Mediterranean, where Christianity flourished once as much as ever it did at Rome, is at this time utterly void of Christians, excepting a few towns in the hands of the European princes. And, not to mention all particular places, the large region of Nubia, which had, as is thought, from the Apostles time professed the Christian faith, hath, within these 150 years, for want of ministers (as Alvarez, *Hist. Æthiop.* tells us) quitted Christianity; and is partly revolted to Heathenism, partly fallen off to Mahometanism. So that it seems, that, notwithstanding the argument of hope and fear, the very teachers of tradition may fail in a largely extended church. As for Asia, in the easterly parts of it, there is not now one Christian to four of what there were 500 years ago: and, in the more southerly parts of it, where Christianity had taken the deepest root, the Christians are far inferior in number to the idolaters

idolaters and Mahometans, and do daily decreaſe. What thinks Mr. S. of all this? Have thoſe Chriſtian nations which are turned Mahometans and Pagans, failed in their faith or not? If they have, I expect from him clear inſtances of more that have failed in propagating their kind.

§. 7. But beſides thoſe who have totally apoſtatized from Chriſtianity, hath not the whole Greek church, with the Jacobites and Neſtorians, and all thoſe other ſects which agree with and depend upon theſe, and which, taken together, are manifoldly greater than the Roman church; I ſay, have not all theſe renounced tradition for ſeveral ages? And here, in Europe, hath not a great part of Poland, Hungary, both Germanies, France, and Switzerland; have not the kingdoms of Great Britain, Denmark, Sweden, and a conſiderable part of Ireland, in Mr. S.'s opinion, deſerted tradition? If I ſhould once ſee a whole nation fail, becauſe no body would marry, and contribute to the propagating of mankind, and ſhould find this ſullen humour to prevail in ſeveral nations, and to overſpread vaſt parts of the world. I ſhould then in good earneſt think it poſſible for mankind to fail; unleſs I could ſhew it impoſſible for other nations to do that which I ſee ſome to have done, who were every whit as unlikely to have done it. So that whatever cauſe he aſſigns of hereſy, as pride, ambition, luſt, (*p.* 67.) or any other vice or intereſt, if theſe can take place in whole nations, and make them renounce tradition, then where is the "efficacy of the cauſes to preſerve "faith indeficiently entire in any?" for the demonſtration holds as ſtrongly for all Chriſtians as for any.

§ 8. *Secondly*, From theſe grounds it would follow, that no Chriſtian can live wickedly; becauſe the end of faith being a good life, the arguments of hope and fear muſt in all reaſon be as powerful and efficacious cauſes of a good life, as of a true belief. And that his demonſtration proves the one as much as the other, will be evident from his own reaſoning: for he argues in this manner, *p.* 62. "Good is the proper object of the will. "Good propoſed makes the will to deſire that good, and "conſequently the known means to obtain it. Now, "infinite goods and harms ſufficiently propoſed, are of "their own nature incomparably more powerful cauſes

" to carry the will, than temporal ones. Since, then, " when two cauſes are counterpoiſed, the leſſer, when " it comes to execution, is no cauſe as to the ſubſiſt- " ence of that effect; it follows, that there is no cauſe " to move the wills of a world of believers to be will- " ing to do that which they judge would loſe themſelves " and their poſterity infinite goods, and bring them in- " finite harm, *&c.* in caſe a ſufficient propoſal or appli- " cation be not wanting:" which he tells us, *p.* 65. is not wanting; becauſe " Chriſtianity urged to executi- " on, gives its followers a new life and a new nature; " than which a nearer application cannot be imagined." Doth not this argument extend to the lives of Chriſtians as well as their belief? So that we may as well infer from theſe grounds, that it is impoſſible that thoſe who profeſs Chriſtianity ſhould live contrary to it, as that they ſhould fail to deliver down the doctrine of Chriſt; becauſe whatever can be an inducement and temptation [illegible] to contradict this doctrine by his practice, [illegible] prevail upon him to falſify it. For why ſhould men make any more ſcruple of damning themſelves and their poſterity, by teaching them falſe doctrines, than by living wicked lives? which are equally pernicious with heretical doctrines, not only upon account of the bad influence which ſuch examples of fathers and teachers are like to have upon their ſcholars; but likewiſe they are one of the ſtrongeſt arguments in the world to perſuade them, that their teachers do not themſelves believe that religion which they teach; for, if they did, they would live according to it. Why ſhould any man think, that thoſe arguments of hope and fear which will not prevail upon the generality of Chriſtians to make them live holy lives, ſhould be ſo neceſſarily efficacious to make them ſo much concerned for the preſervation of a right belief? Nay, we have great reaſon to believe, that ſuch perſons will endeavour, as much as may be, to bend and accommodate their belief to their lives. And this is the true ſource of thoſe innovations in faith for which we challenge the church of Rome; which any man may eaſily diſcern, who will but conſider how all their new doctrines are fitted to a ſecular intereſt, and the gratifying of that inordinate appetite

petite after riches and dominion which reigns in the court of Rome, and in the upper part of the clergy of that church.

SECT. IV. *The second answer to this demonstration.*

§ 1. SEcondly, The main grounds of his demonstration are apparently false. For,

1*ſt*, This demonstration supposeth, that the generality of Christian parents, in all ages, perfectly understood the doctrine of Christ, and did not mistake any part of it; that they remembered it perfectly, and that they were faithful and diligent to instruct their children in it: which is as contrary to experience, as that the generality of Christians are knowing and honest. It supposeth likewise, that this doctrine, and every substantial part of it, was received and remembered by the generality of children as it was taught, and was understood perfectly by them without the least material mistake. So he tells us, *p.* 53. that "the substance of faith comes clad in "such plain matters of fact, that the most stupid man "living cannot possibly be ignorant of it." But whether this be reasonable to be supposed or no, may easily be determined, not only from every man's own experience of the world, but from a more advantageous instance of the experience of the first age of Christianity. Was there ever a more knowing and diligent teacher of this doctrine than our Saviour? and yet his disciples fell into many mistakes concerning it: so that, in order to the certain propagating of it, the wisdom of God thought it requisite to endue even those who had learned this doctrine from himself, with an infallible spirit, by which they might be led into all truth, and secured from error and mistake; which had been unnecessary, had it been impossible for them to mistake this doctrine. The Apostles, who taught the world by an infallible spirit, and with infinitely more advantage than ordinary parents can teach their children; yet in all the churches which they planted, they found Christians very apt to mistake and pervert their doctrine, as appears by their frequent complaints in most of their epistles. Nay, the Apostle chargeth the generality of the Hebrews with such a degree of

dulneſs and ſtupidity, that after ſitting time and means of inſtruction, they were ſtill ignorant of the very principles of Chriſtianity So he tells them, chap. v. 11. 12. that *when for the time they ought to be teachers of others, they had need that one ſhould teach them again which be the firſt principles of the oracles of God.* And St. Hierom (*adverſ. Lucifer.*) tells us, that " the primitive churches were " tainted with many groſs errors, whilſt the Apoſtles " were alive, and the blood of Chriſt yet warm in Ju- " dea." But it may be there have been better teachers ſince, and children are more apt to learn now then men were then. Who knows how the world may be changed?

§ 2. 2*dly*, This demonſtration ſuppoſeth the hopes and fears which Chriſtian religion applies to mens minds, to be certain and neceſſary cauſes of actual will in men, to adhere to the doctrine of Chriſt; and conſequently, that they muſt neceſſarily adhere to it. That he ſuppoſeth them to be neceſſary, I have his own word for it; for he tells us, *p.* 74. that " he hath endeavoured to " demonſtrate the indefectibleneſs of tradition, as the " proper and neceſſary effect of thoſe cauſes which pre- " ſerve and continue tradition on foot;" and what thoſe cauſes are, he told us before, *p.* 60. that " they " are hopes and fears ſtrongly applied." But I hope, that the indefectibleneſs of tradition cannot be a neceſſary effect of the ſtrong application of thoſe hopes and fears, unleſs thoſe hopes and fears be a neceſſary cauſe of that effect. And indeed this is ſufficiently implied in his ſaying, that " they are the cauſes of actual will in " Chriſtians to adhere to tradition." For if theſe cauſes of actual will be conſtant (as he muſt ſuppoſe) then they are certain, and neceſſary, and infallible cauſes of adhering to this doctrine: for whatever is in act, is neceſſary while it is ſo; and if it be conſtantly in act, the effect is always neceſſary. But what a wild ſuppoſition is this, that moral motives and arguments working upon a free principle, the will of man, do neceſſarily produce their effect? Is it neceſſary, that the hopes of heaven and the fears of hell ſhould keep Chriſtians conſtant to the doctrine of Chriſt? and is it not as neceſſary, that theſe arguments ſhould prevail upon them to the practice of it? It is in vain to go about to demonſtrate

ſtrate, that all men muſt be good, who have ſufficient arguments propounded to them, when experience tells us the contrary. Nay, it is in reaſon impoſſible, that moral arguments ſhould be of a neceſſary and infallible efficacy; becauſe they are always propounded to a free agent, who may chuſe whether he will yield to them or not. Indeed it is always reaſonable, that men ſhould yield to them; and if they be reaſonable, they will: but ſo long as they are free, it can never be infallibly certain that they will. And if men be not free, it is no virtue at all in them to be wrought upon by theſe arguments. For what virtue can it be in any man, to entertain the Chriſtian doctrine, and adhere to it, and live accordingly, if he does all this neceſſarily; that is, whether he will or no; and can no more chuſe whether he will do ſo or not, than whether he will ſee the light when the ſun ſhines upon his open eyes, or whether he will hear a ſound when all the bells in the town are ringing in his ears; or (to uſe Mr. S.'s own ſimilitudes, p. 53.) whether he will "feel heat, cold, pain, pleaſure, "or any other material quality that affects his ſenſes?" We ſee then how unreaſonable his ſuppoſitions are; and yet, without theſe grounds, his demonſtration fails: for, if it be poſſible that Chriſtians may miſtake or forget the doctrine of Chriſt, or any part of it, or be defective in diligence to inſtruct others in it; or if it be poſſible that the will of man, which is free, may not be neceſſarily and infallibly ſwayed by the arguments of hope and fear: then it is poſſible that tradition may fail. And is not this a good demonſtration, which ſupports itſelf upon ſuch principles, as do directly affront the conſtant experience and the cleareſt reaſon of mankind?

§ 3. And here I cannot but take notice, how inconſiſtent he is to himſelf in laying the grounds of tradition's certainty. In one part of his book he tells us, p. 53. that "tradition hath for its baſis the beſt na-"ture in the univerſe, that is, man's; not according "to his moral part, defectible by reaſon of original "corruption; nor yet his intellectuals, darkly groping "ing the purſuit of ſcience, &c. but according to thoſe "faculties in him, perfectly and neceſſarily ſubject to "the operations and ſtrokes of nature, that is his eyes,

" ears, handling, and the direct impression of know-
" ledge, as naturally and necessarily issuing from the af-
" fecting those senses, as it is to feel heat, cold, pain,
" pleasure, or any other material quality." So that, according to this discourse, the basis of tradition is not man's nature considered as moral, and capable of intellectual reflection; for in this consideration, it is dark and defectible: but man's nature, considered as capable of direct sensitive knowledge, as acting naturally and necessarily: which is to say, that tradition is founded in the nature of man, considered not as a man, but a brute; under which consideration, I see no reason why he should call it the best nature in the universe. But now, how will he reconcile this discourse with the grounds of his demonstration, where he tells us, that the stability of tradition is founded in the arguments of hope and fear; the objects of which being future and at a distance, cannot work upon a man immediately by direct impressions upon his senses, but must work upon him by way of intellectual reflection and consideration? For I hope he will not deny, but that the arguments of hope and fear work upon man according to his moral and intellectual part, else how are they arguments? And if a man, according to his moral part, be (as he says) defectible, how can the indefectibility of tradition be founded in those arguments which work upon man only according to his moral part? I have purposely all along, both for the reader's ease and mine own, neglected to take notice of several of his inconsistencies; but these are such clear and transparent contradictions, that I could do no less than make an example of them.

Sect. V. *The third answer to his demonstration.*

§ 1. THirdly, This demonstration is confuted by clear and undeniable instances to the contrary. I will mention but two.

1st, The tradition of the one true God, which was the easiest to be preserved of any doctrine in the world, being short and plain, planted in every man's nature, and perfectly suited to the reason of mankind. And yet this

this tradition, not having passed through many hands, by reason of the long age of man, was so defaced and corrupted, that the world did lapse into polytheism and idolatry. Now, a man that were so hardy as to demonstrate against matter of fact, might, by a stronger demonstration than Mr. S.'s, prove, that though it be certain this tradition hath failed, yet it was impossible it should fail: as Zeno demonstrated the impossibility of motion, against Diogenes walking before his eyes. For the doctrine of the one true God "was settled in the "heart of Noah, and firmly believed by him to be the "way to happiness; and the contradicting or deserting "of this, to be the way to misery." And this doctrine was by him so taught to his children; who were "encouraged by these motives, to adhere to this doctrine, and to propagate it to their children, and "were deterred by them from relinquishing it. And "this was in all ages the persuasion of the faithful." Now, the "hopes of happiness, and the fears of misery, strongly applied, are the causes of actual will. "Besides, the thing was feasible, or within their power; "that is, what they were bred to, was knowable by "them;" and that much more easily than any other doctrine whatsoever, being short, and plain, and natural. "This put, it follows as certainly, that a great number in each age would continue to hold themselves, "and teach their children as themselves had been "been taught, that is, would follow and stick to this "tradition of the one true God, as it doth, that a cause "put actually causing, produceth its effect. Actually, "I say; for since the cause is put, and the patient disposed, it follows inevitably, that the cause is put "still actually causing." This demonstration, which concludes an apparent falshood, hath the whole strength of Mr. S.'s, and several advantages beyond it. For the doctrine conveyed by this tradition, is the most important, being the first principle of all religion; the danger of corrupting it as great, the facility of preserving it much greater, than of the Christian doctrine, for the causes before mentioned: and yet, after all, it signifies nothing against certain experience, and unquestionable matter of fact; only it sufficiently shews the vanity of

Mr.

Mr. S.'s pretended demonstration, built upon the same or weaker grounds.

§ 2. 2*dly*, The other instance shall be in the Greek church, who received the Christian doctrine as entire from the Apostles, and had as great an obligation to propagate it truly to posterity, and the same "fears and "hopes strongly applied, to be the actual causes of "will;" in a word, all the same arguments and causes to preserve and continue tradition on foot, which the Roman church had: and yet, to the utter confusion of Mr. S.'s demonstration, tradition hath failed among them. For, as speculators, they deny the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Son; and, as testifiers, they disown any such doctrine to have been delivered to them by the precedent age, or to any other age of their church, by the Apostles, as the doctrine of Christ.

§ 3. To this instance of the Greek church, because Mr. White hath offered something by way of answer, I shall here consider it. He tells us, (*Apology for tradition, p.* 51.) that "the plea of the Greek church is non-"tradition; alledging only this, that their fathers did "not deliver the doctrine of the procession of the Holy "Ghost; not that they say the contrary: which clear-"ly demonstrates there are no opposite traditions be-"tween them and us." But this was not the thing Mr. White was concerned to do, to demonstrate there were no opposite traditions between the Greeks and the Latins, but to secure his main demonstration of the impossibility of tradition's failing, against this instance. For that the Greeks have no such tradition as this, "that the "Holy Ghost proceeds from the Son," is as good evidence of the failure of tradition, as if they had a positive tradition, "that he proceeds only from the Father;" especially if we consider, that they (*Phot. ep.* 7.) charge the Latin church with innovation in this matter; and say, that the addition of that clause, "of the procession "from the Son also," is a corruption of the ancient faith, and a devilish invention. Why then does Mr. White go about to baffle so material an objection, and I fear his own conscience likewise, by a pitiful evasion, instead of a solid answer? What though there be no opposite traditions between the Greek and Latin church? yet,

yet if their faith be oppoſite, will it not from hence follow that tradition hath failed in one of them? I wonder that Mr. White, who hath ſo very well confuted the infallibility of Popes and councils, and thereby undermined the very foundation of that religion, ſhould not, by the ſame light of reaſon, diſcover the fondneſs of his own opinion concerning the infallibility of oral tradition, which hath more and greater abſurdities in it than that which he confutes. And to ſhew Mr. White the abſurdity of it, I will apply his demonſtration of the infallibility of Chriſtian tradition in general, to the Greek church in particular; by which every one will ſee, that it does as ſtrongly prove the impoſſibility of tradition's failing in the Greek church, as in the Roman Catholic, as they are pleaſed to call it. His demonſtration is this: (*De fid. & theolog. tract.* 1. § 4.) "Chriſt commanded "his Apoſtles to preach to all the world; and left any "one ſhould doubt of the effect, he ſent his Spirit into "them, to bring to their remembrance what he had "taught them; which Spirit did not only give them a "power to do what he inclined them to, but did cauſe "them actually to do it." I cannot but take notice by the way, of the ill conſequence of this; which is, that men may doubt whether thoſe who are to teach the doctrine of Chriſt will remember it, and teach it to others, unleſs they have that extraordinary and efficacious aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt, which the Apoſtles had. If this be true, his demonſtration is at an end; for he cannot plead that this aſſiſtance hath been continued ever ſince the Apoſtles. He proceeds, "The Apoſtles preached this "doctrine; the nations underſtood it, lived according to "it, and valued it as that which was neceſſary to them "and their poſterity incomparably beyond any thing "elſe." All this I ſuppoſe done to and by the Greeks, as well as any other nation. "Theſe things being put, "it cannot enter into any man's underſtanding, but "that the Chriſtian [Greeks] of the firſt age, being the "ſcholars of the Apoſtles, could and would earneſtly "commend the Chriſtian doctrine to their poſterity; if "ſo, it is evident that they did. So that the continu-"ance of purity of the faith in the [Greek] church, is "founded upon this, that fathers always delivered the

"ſame

" ſame doctrine to their children which they had receiv-
" ed from their fathers, and did believe it under this
" very notion and title as received. Nor could any one
" [of that church] deliver another doctrine under this
" title, but he would be convinced of a lie by the reſt:
" and if the whole [Greek] church ſhould endeavour to
" deliver a new doctrine under that title, [and there is
" the ſame reaſon if they ſhould leave out any article of
" the old doctrine] that whole age would be in their
" conſciences condemned of perfidiouſneſs and parricide.
" Now, this is as impoſſible, as it is that all mankind
" ſhould conſpire to kill themſelves." And he after-
wards (*ibid.* § 3.) gives the reaſon why it is ſo impoſſible that tradition ſhould fail, and it is a very bold and ſaucy one, that " if the tradition of the Chriſtian faith be not " more firm than the courſe of the ſun and moon, and " the propagation of mankind, then God hath ſhewn " himſelf an unskilful artificer." What is there in all this demonſtration which may not be accomodated to the Greek church with as much force and advantage as to the Catholic? unleſs he can ſhew, that it is very poſſible that all the men in Greece may conſpire to kill themſelves, but yet abſolutely impoſſible that all the men in the world ſhould do ſo; which I am ſure he cannot ſhew, unleſs he can demonſtrate, that though it be poſſible for a million of as wiſe men as any are to be found in the world together, to conſpire to do a fooliſh action, yet it is impoſſible that a hundred millions, not one jot wiſer than the other, ſhould agree together to the doing of it.

§ 4. From all this it appears, that Mr. White's anſwer to this objection doth not ſignify any thing to his purpoſe. For if the proceſſion of the Holy Ghoſt was part of Chriſt's doctrine, then it was delivered by the Apoſtles to the Greek church; if ſo, they could not fail to deliver it down to the next age, and that to the next, and ſo on; but it ſeems they have failed. Where then is " the force of hopes and fears ſtrongly applied?" Where are " the certain cauſes of actual will to adhere " to this doctrine?" Why is not the effect produced, " the cauſes being put actually cauſing?" If the Apoſtles delivered this doctrine, oral tradition is ſo clear and unmiſtakeable,

unmistakeable, and " brings down faith clad in such " plain matters of fact, that the most stupid man living " (much less the Greeks, that were the flower of man- " kind) could not possibly be ignorant of it," *p.* 53, 54; nay, " it exceeds all the power of nature, to blot know- " ledge, thus fixed, out of the soul of one single belie- " ver," *ibid.* [much more out of so vast a church]. And " since no man can hold contrary to his knowledge, or " doubt of what he holds, nor change and innovate with- " out knowing he did so, it is a manifest impossibility a " whole church should in any age fall into an absurdity " so inconsistent with the nature of one single man," *p.* 78. And since " it is natural for every man to speak " truth, and grace is to perfect nature in whatever is " good in it, it follows, that one truly Christian heart " is far more fixed to veracity, than others not imbued " with those heavenly tenets; and consequently that a " multitude of such must incomparably exceed, in point " of testifying, the same number of others unfortified by " Christ's doctrine," *p.* 86. And since such a thought " cannot enter into the most depraved nature, as to " harm another without any good to himself; and yet " this must be, if we put Christian fathers misteaching " their children unreceived doctrine for received, [and " I hope, for the same reason, received doctrines for un- " received], contrary to their knowledge. For suppos- " ing sanctity in the [Greek] church, [and why may " not we as well as in the Latin?] that is, that multi- " tudes in it make heaven their first love, and look on " spiritual goods as their main concern, *&c.* it follows, " that had the fathers [of that church], in any age, " consented to mislead their posterity from what them- " selves [not only] conceited [but knew] to be true, " they should do the most extreme harm imaginable to " others, without any the least good to themselves; " which is perhaps impossible in one single man, more " in few, but infinitely in a multitude, especially of " good men," *p.* 89.

§ 5. Thus I might apply the rest of his ranting rhetoric (but that I am weary of transcribing it) concerning " the natural love of parents to their children," *p.* 90. 91. (unless we suppose the Greek church destitute of it), which must

must needs engage them to use the proper means to bring them to heaven, and save them from hell: as also concerning "the natural care men have of not losing their "credit, by telling pernicious lies." And, not to omit the best part of his demonstration, *p.* 93. (which was therefore prudently reserved to the last place), I must likewise shew, how the principles of each science, arithmetic, geometry, logic, nature, morality, historical prudence, politics, metaphysics, divinity, and, last of all, the new science of controversy, (as he calls it), or the blessed art of eternal wrangling and disputing, (the first principle whereof he tells us, is, "That tradition is certain," do all contribute to shew the certainty of tradition; that is, the impossibility that any part of Christ's doctrine should fail in the Greek church, any more than in the Latin. And surely arithmetic, geometry, natural philosophy, metaphysics, *&c.* will all stand up for the Greek church in this quarrel; for considering that Greece was the place where the arts and sciences were born and bred, it is not to be imagined, that they should be so disingenuous and unnatural, as not to contribute their best assistance to the service of their country.

§ 6. But it may be the Greeks cannot so justly pretend to oral tradition as the Latins. What if St. Peter, the head of the apostles, thought fit to share scripture and tradition between these two churches, and laying his left hand on the Greek church, and his right on the Latin, was pleased to confer the great blessing of oral tradition upon the Latin church? which being to be the seat of infallibility, it was but fitting that she should be furnished with this infallible way of conveying the Christian doctrine. And therefore it may be, that as the scriptures of the new testament were left in Greek, so oral tradition was delivered down only in Latin. This, I confess, is not altogether without some shew of reason. Mr. S. may do well to take the matter into his deeper consideration; he hath in his time improved as weak improbabilities as these into lusty demonstrations. And if he could but demonstrate this, it would very much weaken the force of this instance of the Greek church: Otherwise (for ought I see) this instance will hold good against him:

and

and whatever he can say for the impossibility of tradition's failing in the Latin church, may all be said of the Greek church; if he will but grant that the Apostles preached the same doctrine to them both; that the arguments of hope and fear which this doctrine contains in it, were applied as strongly to the Greeks as to the Latins. And yet, notwithstanding all this, tradition hath plainly failed in the Greek church. Let him now assign the age wherein so vast a number of men conspired to leave out the article of the procession of the Holy Ghost, and shew, how it was possible a whole age could conspire together to damn their posterity, or how the faith of immediate forefathers might be altered, without any such conspiracy; and we are ready to satisfy him how the doctrine of the Latin church might be corrupted and altered, and to tell him punctually in what age it was done. And until he do this, I would intreat him to trouble us no more with those canting questions, (wherein yet the whole force of his demonstration lies) How is it possible a whole age should conspire to change the doctrine of their forefathers? and, In what age was this done? For if it be reasonable to demand of us, in order to the overthrowing of his demonstration, to assign the particular age wherein the Latin church conspired to change the ancient doctrine; with the same reason we require of him, in order to the maintaining of his demonstration, to name the particular age wherein the Greek church conspired to alter the doctrine of Christ, (which was undoubtedly in the first age truly delivered to them by the Apostles) and also to shew, from the rational force and strength of tradition, how it is more impossible for the whole church to have failed in transmitting the doctrine of Christ down to us, or to have conspired to the altering of it, than for such a multitude of Christians as is the vast body of the Greek church. If Mr. S. or Mr. White shew this, they do something; otherwise I must tell them, that unless they can manage these pretty things they call *demonstrations* better, they must shortly either quit their reason, or their religion; or else return to the honest old *Mumpsimus*, of the infallibility of the church from an extraordinary and immediate assistance of the Holy Ghost: or (to make the business short, and stop

all gaps with one bush) come over to the Jesuits, and acknowledge the Pope's infallibility both in matters of faith and fact; by which means they may reconcile themselves to him, and prevent that direful stroke which threatens them from Rome, and is ready to cut them off from the body of the traditionary church. And thus I have done with his first demonstration; and I take it for a good sign that the Popish cause is at a very low ebb, when such stuff as this must be called demonstration.

Sect. VI. *Mr. S.'s. demonstration* à posteriori.

§ 1. I Come now to his demonstration *à posteriori:* which although it falls of itself if the demonstration *à priori* fail, yet because it hath some peculiar absurdities of its own, I shall consider it by itself, as well as with relation to the other.

§ 2. Before he comes to lay it down, with the grounds of it, according to his usual fashion, he premiseth something as yielded by Protestants, which, in his sense, no Protestant ever granted. Just so he dealt with us before concerning the scriptures, saying, that by them the Protestants "must mean unsensed letters and characters." But let us see what it is, *p.* 76. That "this demonstration *à posteriori* seems a needless endeavour against the "Protestants, who yield, that those points in which we "agree, as the Trinity, incarnation, *&c.* came down "by this way of tradition; and this (he saith) no Protestant ever denied." And then he asks, "Whether "the same virtue of tradition would not have been as "powerful to bring down other points in which we do "not agree, had any such been?" Now, if he speak any thing to his own purpose, he must suppose Protestants to yield, that all those points wherein we are agreed were conveyed down to us solely by oral tradition without writing: but this all Protestants deny. So that only which would avail his cause against us, is, to shew, that those points wherein we differ, have not only come down to us by oral teaching, but that they are likewise contained in scripture, without which, we say we can have no sufficient certainty and assurance at this distance

distance, that they were the doctrine of Christ, and that they were not either totally innovated, or else corrupted in the conveyance, from what they were at first. And if he can shew this concerning any point in difference, I promise to yield to him.

§ 3. I come to his demonstration, which I shall set down in his own words, with the principles upon which it relies, *p.* 77. 78. "The effect then we will pitch upon, "and avow to be the proper one of such a cause, is, the "present persuasion of traditionary Christians, (or Ca-"tholics) that their faith hath descended from Christ "and his Apostles uninterruptedly, which we find most "firmly rooted in their heart: and the existence of this "persuasion we affirm to be impossible, without the ex-"istence of tradition's ever indeficiency to beget it. "To prove this, I lay this first principle, That age "which holds her faith thus delivered from the Apostles, "neither can itself have changed any thing in it, nor "know or doubt that any age since the Apostles had "changed or innovated therein. The second principle "shall be this: no age could innovate any thing, and "withal deliver that very thing to posterity as received "from Christ by continual succession." The sum of which is this, That because a present multitude of Christians (*viz.* the Roman church) are persuaded, that Christ's doctrine hath descended to them solely by an uninterrupted oral tradition; therefore this persuasion is an effect which cannot be attributed to any other cause, but the indeficiency of oral tradition. For if neither the present age, nor any age before, could make any change or innovation, then the persuasion of the present age is a plain demonstration, that this doctrine was always the same, and consequently that tradition cannot fail.

§ 4. In answer to this, I shall endeavour to make good these four things.

1. That these principles wholly rely upon the truth of the grounds of his demonstration *à priori*.

2. That these principles are not sufficiently proved by him.

3. That doctrines and practices, which must be acknowledged to have been innovated, have made the same pretence to uninterrupted tradition.

4. That it is not the preſent perſuaſion of the church of Rome, (whom he calls the traditionary Chriſtians) nor ever was, that their faith hath deſcended to them ſolely by oral tradition. If I can now make good theſe four things, I hope his demonſtration is at an end.

SECT. VII. *The firſt anſwer to his ſecond demonſtration.*

§ 1. THat theſe principles wholly rely upon the truth of the grounds of his demonſtration *à priori*. For if the doctrine of Chriſt was either imperfectly taught in any age, or miſtaken by the learners, or any part of it forgotten, (as it ſeems the whole Greek church have forgot that fundamental point of the proceſſion of the Holy Ghoſt, as the Roman church accounts it,) or if the arguments of hope and fear be not neceſſary cauſes of actual will to adhere to tradition, then there may have been changes and innovations in any age, and yet men may pretend to have followed tradition. But I have ſhewn, that ignorance, and negligence, and miſtake, and pride, and luſt, and ambition, and any other vice or intereſt, may hinder thoſe cauſes from being effectual to preſerve tradition entire and uncorrupted. And when they do ſo, it is not to be expected, that thoſe perſons who innovate and change the doctrine, ſhould acknowledge that their new doctrines are contrary to the doctrine of Chriſt; but that they ſhould at firſt advance them as pious; and after they have prevailed, and gained general entertainment, then impudently affirm, that they were the very doctrines which Chriſt delivered; which they may very ſecurely do, when they have it in their power to burn all that ſhall deny it.

§ 2. I will give a clear inſtance of the poſſibility of this in the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation, by ſhewing how this might eaſily come in, in the ninth or tenth age after Chriſt. We will ſuppoſe then, that about this time, when univerſal ignorance, and the genuine daughter of it, (call her devotion or ſuperſtition) had overſpread the world, and the generality of people were ſtrongly inclined to believe ſtrange things; and even the greateſt contradictions were recommended to them under the notion of myſteries; being told by their prieſts and

and guides, that the more contradictious any thing is to reason, the greater merit there is in believing it: I say, let us suppose, that, in this state of things, one or more of the most eminent then in the church, either out of design, or out of superstitious ignorance and mistake of the sense of our Saviour's words used in the consecration of the sacrament, should advance this new doctrine, that the words of consecration, *This is my body*, are not to be understood by any kind of trope (as the like forms in scripture are, as, *I am the vine*, *I am the door*, which are plain tropes) but being used about this great mystery of the sacrament, ought in all reason to be supposed to contain in them some notable mystery; which they will do, if they be understood of a real change of the substance of bread and wine, made by virtue of these words, into the real body and blood of our Saviour. And in all this I suppose nothing, but what is so far from being impossible, that it is too usual for men, either out of ignorance, or interest, to advance new opinions in religion. And such a doctrine as this was very likely to be advanced by the ambitious clergy of that time, as a probable means to draw in the people to a greater veneration of them; which advantage Mr. Rushworth seems to be very sensible of, when he tells (*Dial.* 1. § 4.) that the power of the priest in this particular, is, "such a "privilege, as if all the learned clerks that ever liv- "ed since the beginning of the world, should have stu- "died to raise, advance, and magnify some one state "of men to the highest pitch of reverence and eminen- "cy, they could never, without special light from hea- "ven, have thought of any thing comparable to this." I am of this mind, that it was a very notable device; but, I am apt to think, invented "without any special "light from heaven." Nor was such a doctrine less likely to take and prevail among the people, in an age prodigiously ignorant, and strongly inclined to superstition, and thereby well prepared to receive the grossest absurdities under the notion of mysteries; especially if they were such as might seem to conciliate a greater honour and reverence to the sacrament. Now, supposing such a doctrine as this, so fitted to the humour and temper of the age, to be once asserted, either by chance, or

out of design, it would take like wild-fire; especially if, by some one or more who bore sway in the church, it were but recommended with convenient gravity and solemnity. And altho' Mr. Rushworth says (*Dial.* 3. § 7.) "it is impossible that the authority of one man should "sway so much in the world; because (says he) surely "the devil himself would rather help the church, than "permit so little pride among men;" yet I am not so thoroughly satisfied with this cunning reason: for tho' he delivers it confidently, and with a *surely*; yet I make some doubt, whether the devil would be so forward to help the church; nay, on the contrary, I am inclined to think, that he would rather chuse to connive at this humble and obsequious temper in men, in order to the overthrow of religion, than cross a design so dear to him, by unreasonable temptations to pride. So that, notwithstanding Mr. Rushworth's reason, it seems very likely that such a doctrine, in such an age, might easily be propagated by the influence and authority of one or a few great persons in the church. For nothing can be more suitable to the easy and passive temper of superstitious ignorance, than to entertain such a doctrine with all imaginable greediness, and to maintain it with a proportionable zeal. And if there be any wiser than the rest, who make objections against it, as if this doctrine were new, and full of contradictions, they may easily be born down by the stream, and by the eminency and authority, and pretended sanctity of those who are the heads of this innovation. And when this doctrine is generally swallowed, and all that oppose it are looked upon and punished as heretics, then it is seasonable to maintain, that this doctrine was the doctrine of forefathers; to which end it will be sufficient to those who are willing to have it true, to bend two or three sayings of the ancients to that purpose. And as for the contradictions contained in this doctrine, it was but telling the people then, as they do in effect now, that contradiction ought to be no scruple in the way of faith; that the more impossible any thing is, it is the fitter to be believed; that it is not praise-worthy to believe plain possibilities; but this is the gallantry and heroical power of faith, this is the way to oblige God almighty for ever to

us,

us, to believe flat and downright contradictions: for "God requires at the people's hands (as Mr. Rushworth tells us, *Dial.* 1. § 4.) a credulity of things above and beyond nature; nay, beyond all the fables, "be it spoken with respect, that ever man invented." After this doctrine hath proceeded thus far, and, by the most inhumane severities and cruelties, suppressed dissenters, or in a good measure rooted them out; then, if they please, even this new word *transubstantiation* may pretend also to antiquity, and in time be confidently vouched for a word used by Christians in all ages, and transmitted down to them by those from whom they received the doctrine of the sacrament, as a term of art appendent to it. And when a superstitious church, and designing governors, have once gained this post, and by means of this enormous article of transubstantiation, have sufficiently debauched the minds of men, and made a breach in their understandings wide enough for the entertaining of any error, tho' ever so gross and senseless; then innovations come in amain, and by shoals; and the more absurd and unreasonable any thing is, it is for that very reason the more proper matter for an article of faith. And if any of these innovations be objected against, as contrary to the former belief and practice, it is but putting forth a lusty act of faith, and believing another contradiction, that tho' they be contrary, yet they are the same.

§ 3. And there is nothing in all this but what is agreeable both to history and experience. For that the ninth and tenth ages, and those which followed them till the reformation, were thus prodigiously ignorant and superstitious, is confirmed by the unanimous consent of all histories; and even by those writers that have been the greatest pillars of their own religion. And experience tells us, that in what age soever there are a great company of superstitious people, there will never be wanting a few crafty fellows to make use of this easy and pliable humour to their own ends. Now, that this was the state of those ages of the church, will be evident to any from these testimonies. Platina (*in vit. Romani, Papæ* 116. *a. C.* 900.) writes of Pope Romanus, that he nulled the acts of his predecessor Stephanus: "for (says he) these

"Popes

" Popes minded nothing elſe but how they might ex-
" tinguiſh both the name and dignity of their predeceſ-
" ſors." And if ſo, who can doubt, but that theſe Popes who made it their buſineſs to deſtroy the very memory of their anceſtors, would be very careful to preſerve the doctrine of forefathers But what the care of thoſe times was in this particular, may be conjectured from what Onuphrius ſays *(in Platin.)* by way of confutation of that paſſage in Platina, concerning Pope Joan's reading publicly at Rome, at her firſt coming thither. " This (ſays
" he) is utterly falſe; for there was nothing that they
" were leſs ſolicitous about in thoſe times, than to fur-
" niſh the city with any public teachers." And the time which Onuphrius ſpeaks of, was much about the beginning of the tenth century. Phil. Burgomenſis ſays (*anno* 906) " It happened in that age, through the ſlothfulneſs
" of men, that there was a general decay of virtue both
" in the head and members." Again (*anno* 908) " Theſe
" times, through the ambition and cruel tyranny of the
" Popes, were extremely unhappy: for the Popes ſet-
" ting aſide the fear of God, and his worſhip, fell into
" ſuch enmities among themſelves as cruel tyrants ex-
" erciſe towards one another." Sabellicus ſays (*Ennead.* 9. *l.* 1. *anno* 900) " It is wonderful to obſerve what a
" ſtrange forgetfulneſs of all arts did about this time
" ſeize upon men; inſomuch that neither the Popes, nor
" other princes, ſeemed to have any ſenſe or apprehen-
" ſion of any thing that might be uſeful to human life.
" There were no wholſome laws, no reparations of
" churches, no purſuit of liberal arts; but a kind of
" ſtupidity and madneſs, and forgetfulneſs of man-
" ners, had poſſeſſed the minds of men." And a little after: " I cannot (ſays he) but much wonder from
" whence theſe tragical examples of Popes ſhould
" ſpring; and how their minds ſhould come to be ſo
" devoid of all piety, as neither to regard the perſon
" which they ſuſtained, nor the place they were
" in." Sigonius (*De regn. Ital. l.* 6.) ſpeaking of theſe times, about the beginning of the tenth century, calls them " the fouleſt and blackeſt, both in reſpect of the
" wickedneſs of princes, and the madneſs of the peo-
" ple, there are to be found in all antiquity." Genebrard (*Chron. l.* 4.) ſpeaking of the ſame time: " This
(" ſays

" (says he) is called the unhappy age; being destitute " of men eminent for wit and learning, as also of fa- " mous princes and Popes. In this time there was " scarce any thing done worthy to be remembered by " posterity." And he adds afterwards, " But chiefly " unhappy in this one thing, that, for almost an hun- " dred and fifty years together, about fifty Popes did " utterly degenerate from the virtue of their ancestors." He should have added farther, but even to a miracle happy in another respect, that, during this long and total degeneracy from the piety and virtue of their ancestors, they did not in the least swerve from them in matter of faith and doctrine: a thing incredible, were there not demonstration for it. Werner *(Fascic. tempor.)* gives this character of that time: " About the year of " our Lord one thousand, there began an effeminate " time, in which the Christian faith began to degene- " rate exceedingly, and to decline from its ancient vi- " gour; insomuch that, in many countries of Christen- " dom, neither sacraments nor ecclesiastical rites were " observed:—and people were given to soothsaying and " witchcraft; and the priest was like the people." It seems, by this testimony, that tradition did faulter a little in that age; else the Christian faith could not possibly have degenerated and declined so very much; and, which threatens Mr. S.'s demonstration most of all, that the practical tradition of sacraments, and other ecclesiastical observances, did fail in many Christian countries. Gerbert, who lived in that time, gives this short character of the Roman church, in an epistle of his *(ep.* 40.) to Stephen, Deacon of that church, " The world stands " amazed at the manners of Rome." But most full is the complaint of a great prelate of the church concerning those times: " In the West, (says he, *Bell. Sacr. l.* " 5. *c.* 8.) and almost all the world over, especially " among those who are called *the faithful*, faith failed, " and there was no fear of God among them." It seems the argument of fear had lost its force. " Justice was " perished from among them; and violence prevailing " against equity, governed the nations. Fraud, deceit, " and the arts of cozenage, were grown universal. All " kind of virtue gave way as an useless thing, and wic- " kedness

" kedneſs ſupplied its place. The world ſeemed to be " declining apace towards its evening, and the ſecond " coming of the Son of man to draw near: for love " was grown cold, and faith was not found upon earth. " All things were in confuſion, and the world looked " as if it would return to its old chaos.—All ſorts of " fornication were committed with the ſame freedom as " if they had been lawful actions, for men neither bluſh- " ed at them, nor were puniſhed for them —Nor did " the clergy live better than the people: for the biſhops " were grown negligent of the duty of their place, *&c.* " In a word, men ran themſelves headlong into all vice, " and all fleſh had corrupted its way." And farther, to ſhew the great neglect of prieſts and biſhops in the work of teaching and inſtructing, which is ſo neceſſary to the preſerving of tradition inviolable, I will add the teſtimony of one *(Elfric. ſerm. ad ſacerdot.)* who lived in thoſe times; who tells us, that " in thoſe days the " prieſts and biſhops, who ought to have been the pil- " lars of the church, were ſo negligent, that they did " not mind the divine ſcripture; nor take any care to " teach and inſtruct ſcholars that might ſucceed them, " as we read holy men had uſed to do, who left many " ſcholars perfectly inſtructed to be their ſucceſſors." If they had only neglected the ſcriptures, all might have been well enough; but it ſeems they took no care to inſtruct people in the way of oral tradition, nor to furniſh the church with a new generation of able teach- ers, who might " deliver down from hand to hand the " ſenſe and faith of forefathers." This laſt teſtimony the late learned Lord Primate of Ireland, biſhop Uſher, (in his book *De Chriſtian. eccleſ. ſucceſſ.* &c. *c.* 2. & 3. where ſeveral of the teſtimonies I have produced, with many more to the ſame purpoſe, may be ſeen,) cites out of a MS. in Bennet college library in Cambrige; con- cerning the authority of which MS. there need be no diſpute between Mr. S. and me; becauſe the whole force and effect of this teſtimony is ſufficiently contained in thoſe citations which I have brought out of public and unqueſtionable books.

§ 4. All theſe teſtimonies which I have produced, are, in general, and for the ſubſtance of them, confirmed by

two

two of the greateſt props of the Romiſh church, Bellarmine and Baronius. Bellarmine (*De Rom. Pontif. l.* 4. *c.* 12.) ſays of his tenth age, that "there was never any "either more unlearned or more unhappy." Baronius (*Annal. tom.* 10. *ann.* 900,) ſpeaks more particularly: "What was then the face of the Roman church? How "deformed? when whores, no leſs powerful than vile, "bore the chief ſway at Rome; and, at their pleaſure, "changed ſees, appointed biſhops, and (which it is hor-"rible to mention,) did thruſt into St. Peter's ſee their "own gallants, falſe Popes, who would not have been "mentioned in the catalogue of the Roman Popes, but "only for the more diſtinct recording of ſo long a ſuc-"ceſſion of times?" And a little after, "Chriſt was "then, it ſeems, in a very deep ſleep;—and, which was "worſe, when the Lord was thus aſleep, there were no "diſciples to awaken him, being themſelves faſt aſleep. "What kind of Cardinals, Presbyters, and Deacons, "can we think were choſen by theſe monſters, when "nothing is ſo natural as for every one to propagate "his own likeneſs?" It is very much that theſe lewd women, and their favourite Popes, Cardinals, and Biſhops, who then ſwayed the church, ſhould, when they were ſo careleſs of their own ſouls, be ſo tender of the ſalvation of poſterity; and when they adminiſtered all other affairs of the church ſo extravagantly, ſhould be ſo careful of the main chance, as to tranſmit the Chriſtian doctrine entire and uncorrupted to ſucceding ages. Yet Mr. S. hath demonſtrated this *à poſteriori*, which ſeems ſo very ſtrange to a man that conſiders things *à priori*.

§ 5. But it may be this diſmal ſtate of the Roman church laſted but a little while; and ſhe did in the ſame age, before tradition could he interrupted, recover herſelf out of this degenerate condition. I will therefore inquire a little into the ſtate of ſucceeding times. And I find, in the thirteenth century, St. Bernard (*in converſ. Sancti Pauli, ſerm.* 1.) complaining, that the degeneracy of the prieſts was in his days greater than ever: "We cannot (ſays he) now ſay, As is the "people, ſo is the prieſt; for the people are not ſo bad "as their prieſts." In the fifteenth century, Nic. de Clemangiis,

Clemangiis, who lived in that time, wrote a book upon this argument, " Of the corrupt ſtate of the church;" by which we may make ſome judgment, whether in that age it was (as Mr. S. ſays) impoſſible, but that the Chriſtian doctrine ſhould be entirely preſerved, and faithfully and diligently taught. He ſays, *c.* 3. there was an univerſal degeneracy in the church, " from the very " head of it to its loweſt members." In the ſame chapter he complains, " Who is there that preaches the goſ- " pel to the people? who ſhews them the way to ſalva- " tion, either by word or action?" It ſeems there was a great failure both of oral and practical tradition. Again, ſpeaking of the Pope's taking to himſelf the collation of all vacant biſhopricks and dignities, he ſays, *c.* 5. one might think the Pope did this, " that the church " might be provided of worthier governors, both in re- " ſpect of their learning and their lives, did not the " thing itſelf declare the contrary; and that ignorant " and uſeleſs perſons, provided they had money, were " by Simony advanced to the higheſt degrees in the " church." And, ſpeaking what a vaſt number of candidates there was uſually at Rome, from all parts, waiting for benefices and dignities, he tells us, *c.* 6. that many of theſe " did not come from their ſtudies, or " from ſchools of learning, to govern pariſhes, but " from the plough, and from the meaneſt profeſſions; " and that they underſtood Latin and Arabic much at " the ſame rate; and many of them could not read at " all. But it may be (ſays he) their manners were ſuch " as might be ſome excuſe for their ignorance. No; " though their learning was but little, their virtue was " leſs; for, being brought up in idleneſs, they followed " nothing but debauchery and ſports, *&c.* Hence it " comes to paſs, that, in all places, there are ſo many " wicked, and wretched, and ignorant prieſts.—Hence " it is, that prieſts are ſo contemned by the common " people.—Formerly the prieſthood was highly honour- " ed by the people, and nothing was more venerable " than that order of men; but now nothing is more " vile and deſpicable."—" I make no doubt, but there " are now more thieves and robbers, than true paſtors " in the church," *c.* 9.—Why ſhould any man now

" flatter

" flatter himself with hopes of preferment, because of " his virtue or learning? Men do not now, as former- " ly, rise in the church by such arts," *c.* 11.—" Which " of these that are now-a-days advanced to the Pontifi- " cal dignity, hath so much as perfunctorily read, or " heard, or learned the scriptures; yea, or ever touched " any more than the cover of the bible?" *c.* 13. Again, speaking of the prodigious covetousness of the governors of the church, and the gross neglect of their flocks: " They would (says he, *c.* 14.) much more " contentedly bear the loss of ten thousand souls, than " of ten or twelve shillings. But why do I say more " contentedly, when, without the least trouble or dis- " turbance to themselves, they can bear the loss of souls? " a thing so far from their care, that it never entered " into their thoughts." Had the heretics of those days but had wit enough, and a little money, they might, it seems, for a small sum, have hired the governors of the church to have renounced tradition, or to have ceased to propagate it, though they had known that in so doing they should have damned all their posterity. He goes on, and tells us, that " if there were perhaps any one ' who did not take these courses, the rest would all ' snarl at him, call him fool, and say he was unfit to ' be a priest.—So that the study of the scriptures, to- ' gether with the professors of it, was turned into ' laughter and scorn by all; but, which is prodigious, ' especially by the Popes, who preferred their own tra- ' ditions many degrees before the commands of God." I desire Mr. S. to take notice in what kind of times tradition was set up against scripture. Again, speaking of the choice of persons to be priests, he tells us, *c.* 16 that there was no inquiry made into their lives, no question about their manners. As for their learning, (says he,) what need I speak of that, when we see the priests, almost universally, have much ado to read, though but in an hesitating and spelling fashion, drawing out one syllable after another, without understanding either the sense of what they read, or the words?" I am now reconciled to oral tradition, and convinced, that there was great need of it in those ages, in which scarce any of the priests could either write

or read. I omit the particulars of what he says (*c.* 20. 21. 23.) concerning the common "drunkenness and "incontinency of priests, who [because they made con-"science of marriage] kept whores in their houses;" concerning the dissolute lives of monks; and concerning nunneries, which, instead of being "the sanctuaries "of God, were the abominable stews of Venus, and the "receptacles of lascivious young men; insomuch (says "he) that at this day it is the same thing to put a virgin "into a nunnery, and to make her a common strumpet." And, to shew that he does not speak these things of a few, but with relation to the general corruption of that age, he adds, *c.* 25. "that wickedness did so abound "in all orders of men, that scarce one among a thou-"sand was to be found who did truly live up to his "profession; and if there was any one that did not "follow these lewd courses, he became ridiculous to "others, and was branded either as an insolent singu-"lar madman, or an hypocrite." I will conclude this long testimony with the character which he gives (*c.* 27.) of one of the Popes of his time, Clement by name, *viz.* That "he did chiefly apply himself to gratify and "oblige all the parasites and buffoons that had any in-"terest in the several courts of princes; and, to this "end, did confer upon these, and upon handsome young "boys, (which he much delighted in,) almost all the "vacant bishopricks, and most of the other church-"dignities." It is well that oral tradition hath the security of infallibility, otherwise it had in all probability been lost among this lewd sort of people, which yet they gravely call *the holy Roman Catholic church.*

§ 6. To this effect I might have produced testimonies concerning every age from the ninth to the sixteenth; but Mr. Cressy hath saved me that labour; who acknowledges, (*Exomolog. c.* 68.) that "these worst times of "the church, when ignorance, worldliness, pride, ty-"ranny, &c. reigned with so much scope; when the "Popes (so wicked, so abominable in their lives) enjoy-"ed so unlimited a power even over secular princes "themselves, and much more over the clergy:" I say he acknowledges, that "these worst times continued du-"ring the space of about six ages before Luther." A competen

competent time, one would think, for tradition to have miſcarried in, were it not, as Mr. S. ſays, indefectible. Mr. Creſſy indeed tells us, (*ibid.*) that this "was to him "an irrefragable teſtimony of a ſtrange watchfulneſs of "divine providence over the church, to preſerve it "from the gates of hell (that is, eſtabliſhed and dange-"rous errors) during theſe worſt times." And very likely it is that this might appear ſo to ſuch a Catholic, "whoſe judgment)he tells us,) it is to renounce his "own judgment." But it will never appear irrefragable to any man that hath his judgment about him, unleſs Mr. Creſſy can prove, that by that phraſe, *viz. the gates of hell*, the ſcripture does not mean groſs wickedneſs of life, as well as dangerous errors in opinion; and likewiſe, that a general vitiouſneſs and debauchery of manners is not as pernicious to Chriſtianity, and as deſtructive to the end of it, as eſtabliſhed errors in doctrine; and if ſo, that the providence of God is not equally concerned to preſerve the church from things equally pernicious. When he hath proved theſe three things, then this declamatory diſcourſe of his may ſignify ſomething, but not before.

§ 7. Now, if this be a true repreſentation of the ſtate of the Roman church in thoſe ages, was not this a very fit time for the devil to play his pranks in? Will any man that reads theſe teſtimonies, think it impoſſible that the doctrine of Chriſt ſhould have been depraved in this age; or that the moſt ſenſeleſs and abſurd tenets might then be brought in under the notion of Chriſtian doctrine; when ſcarce any one knew what the doctrine of Chriſt was; when a general ignorance of letters, and almoſt an univerſal ſtupidity and madneſs, had ſeized upon the minds of men; when there was a horrid depravation of manners, and a general failure of virtue and piety, both in the head and members of the church; when the lives of the Popes were tragically wicked, and no footſteps of piety appeared in them; when, for about 150 years together, in a continued ſucceſſion of fifty Popes, there was ſcarce one pious and virtuous man (or woman) ſat in that chair; when the whores governed Rome, and put out and put in biſhops at their pleaſure, and made their own gallants Popes, who would be ſure to make a

college of Cardinals of such monsters as themselves; when pretty boys, and parasites, and buffoons, led the head of the church by the nose, and were gratified with the best bishoprics and dignities in the church; when there was a general decay of knowledge, and defection of the Christian faith; when in many countries, neither sacraments nor other ecclesiastical rites were observed; when violence and fraud, and all the arts of deceit and cozenage, and blacker arts than these, were the common study and practice; when intemperance, and all kind of lewdness and debauchery reigned in all sorts and orders of men; when the generality of bishops and priests (who according to Mr. Rushworth, *Dial.* 3. § 3. can only teach the traditionary doctrine) were ignorant in the scriptures, and in every thing else, very few of them being able so much as to read tolerably; and did neglect to teach the people, and to breed up any in knowledge to succeed them in their office; and in the lewdness of their lives did surpass the vilest of the people? Was not such an age a fit season to plant the doctrine of transubstantiation in? Or if any thing more monstrous than that can be imagined, it might then have taken place; for what weeds would not have grown in so rank a soil? Doth Mr. S. think it impossible, that those that were born in the church then should be ignorant of the doctrine of Christ, when scarce any one would take the pains to teach it them; or that it could then have been altered, when so few understood, and fewer practised it? When prodigious impiety and wickedness did overspread the church, from the Pope down to the meanest of the laity, can any one believe, that men generally made conscience to instruct their children in the true faith of Christ? Was it impossible there should be any neglect of this duty, when all others failed; that there should be any mistake about the doctrine of Christ, when there was so much ignorance? unless he be of Mr. Rushworth's mind, who (*Dial.* 3. § 7.) reckons ignorance among the parents of religion. Where were then the arguments of hope and fear? Were they strongly applied, or were they not? Were they causes of actual will in Christians to believe well when they lived so ill? Or is Christianity only fitted to form mens minds to a right belief, but of

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no efficacy to govern their lives? Hath Christ taken care to keep his church from error, but not from vice? as the great Cardinal Perron, stooping below his own wit and reason to serve a bad cause, tells us, (*Reply to King James, l. 4. c. 6.*) that "the church sings, and will sing "to the end of the world, *I am black, but I am fair*; "that is to say, I am black in manners, but fair in doc-"trine:" As if the meaning of the prophecies and promises of scripture made to the church, were this, that, by the extraordinary care of God's providence, and peculiar assistance of his Holy Spirit, she should be wicked, but orthodox, to the end of the world. Where were then the vigorous causes imprinting Christ's doctrine, and continuing it more particularly at Rome than any where else; and of securing that see, and its supreme pastor, in the faith and practice of the Christian doctrine, above any other see or pastor whatsoever? Who is so little versed in history, as not to understand the dismal state of religion in the Romish church in those times? Who does not know what advantages the Bishops of Rome, and their servile clergy, made of the ignorance and superstition of those and the succeeding ages; and by what arts and steps they raised themselves to that power which they held in the church for a long while after; when they could tread upon the necks of princes, and make a great king walk barefoot, and yield himself to be scourged by a company of petulant monks: when they could send any man upon an errand to visit the holy sepulchre, or the shrine of such a saint: and command five or six kings with great armies upon a needless expedition into the holy land, that so, during their absence, they might play their own game the better: when they could mint miracles, and impose upon the belief of the people (without the authority of any ancient books) absurd and counterfeit tales of ancient saints and martyrs, as delivered down to them by tradition; and could bring that foppish book the *Legend* almost into equal authority and veneration with the Bible; and persuade the easy people, that St. Denys carried his own head in his hand, after it was cut off, two miles, and kissed it when he laid it down? Any one that shall but reflect upon the monstrous practices of the Roman Bishops and clergy in those

ages, the ſtrange feats they played, and what abſurdities they impoſed upon the ſuperſtitious credulity of princes and people, may readily imagine, not only the poſſibility, but the eaſineſs of innovating new doctrines as they pleaſed, under the ſpecious pretences of antiquity, and conſtant and uninterrupted tradition.

§ 8. And this kind of diſcourſe concerning the poſſibility of errors coming into the church, is not, as Mr. White ridiculouſly compares it, (*Apology for tradition, p.* 49.) as if an orator ſhould go about to perſuade people, that "George, by the help of a long ſtaff, and "a nimble caſt of his body, and ſuch like advantages, "might leap over Paul's ſteeple; never conſidering all "the while the diſproportion of all theſe advantages to "the height of the ſteeple: ſo (ſaith he) he that diſ"courſeth at large how errors uſe to ſlide into man's "life, without comparing the power of the cauſes of er"ror to the ſtrength of reſiſting, which conſiſts in this "principle, Nothing is to be admitted but what deſcends "by tradition, *&c.* ſays no more towards proving an "error's over-running the church, than the orator for "George's leaping over the ſteeple." How vain is this, when it appears from this inſtance that I have given of the ſtate of the Roman church in the ninth and tenth centuries, and afterwards, that the cauſes of error were infinitely ſtronger than the power of reſiſtance? The great cauſes of error are, ignorance and vice: where ignorance reigns, there is no power; where vice, no will to reſiſt it. And how great the ignorance and vitiouſneſs of all orders of men in the Roman church was, is too too apparent from the teſtimonies I have brought. Where was the ſtrength of reſiſting error, when for 150 years together the popes were the vileſt of men, biſhops and prieſts overwhelmed with ignorance, abandoned to all manner of vice, and moſt ſupinely negligent in inſtructing the people? In ſuch a degenerate ſtate of a church, what ſtrength is there in this principle, "No"thing is to be admitted but what deſcends by traditi"on?" When thoſe who ought to teach what that doctrine is which was delivered to them by tradition, are generally careleſs of their duty, and ignorant themſelves what that doctrine is; when they addict themſelves wholly

ly to the satisfying of their ambition, and other lusts, and carrying on designs of gain, and getting dominion over the people; what can hinder men so disposed from corrupting the doctrine of Christ, and suiting it to their own lusts and interests? And what shall hinder the people from embracing those corruptions, when, by the negligence of their pastors to instruct them, and not only so, but also by their being deprived of the scriptures in a known tongue, they are become utterly incapable of knowing what the true doctrine of Christ is? So that in an age of such profound ignorance and vice, and general neglect of instruction, it is so far from being impossible for errors to over-run a church, that the contrary is morally impossible; and George's long staff, and advantageous cast of his body, are more powerful causes to enable him to leap over Paul's steeple, than this principle, "That nothing is to be admitted but what descends by "tradition," is to keep errors out of a church in an ignorant and vitious age, when few or none are either able or willing to instruct men in the truth. For suppose this always to have been the principle of Christians, *viz.* "That nothing is to be admitted as the doctrine of "Christ, but what is descended to them by tradition;" how shall this principle secure the church from heresy, any more than this, *viz.* "That nothing but truth is "to be assented to," doth secure men from error? or more than this, *viz.* "That no man is to do any thing "but what is wise and virtuous," does secure the generality of mankind from folly and vice?

Sect. VIII. *The second answer to his second demonstration.*

§ 1. THE principles upon which this demonstration relies, are not sufficiently proved by him.

His first principle is this, "That age which holds her "faith delivered thus from the Apostles, neither can itself have changed any thing in it, nor know or doubt "that any age since the Apostles had changed or innovated any thing therein. This proposition (he tells "us) needs no proof to evidence it, but only an explication: for since no man can hold contrary to his knowledge,

" knowledge, or doubt of what he holds, nor change " or innovate in the case proposed without knowing he " did so; it is a manifest impossibility a whole age should " fall into an absurdity so inconsistent with the nature " of one single man." But (by his favour) that which he says is no proof, but only an explication, is a proof, if it be any thing; and the force of it is this: " That " which is inconsistent with the nature of one single " man, is manifestly impossible to a whole age; but it " is inconsistent with the nature of any single man to " hold contrary to his knowledge, *&c.* therefore impos- " sible to a whole age: and consequently, that age " which holds her faith delivered thus from the Apo- " stles, neither can itself have changed any thing, nor, " *&c.*" So that, in order to the making good of this first principle, Mr. S hath left nothing unproved, but only this proposition, namely, That it is impossible that any one single man that holds his faith to have been delivered uninterruptedly from the Apostles, should either himself have changed any thing in it, or know or doubt that any age since the Apostles hath changed or innovated any thing therein. And to make out the truth of this proposition, there only remains this to be proved, *viz.* That it is impossible for any single man to be mistaken: for if that be possible, then, contrary to Mr. S. a man may hold that to have been delivered as a doctrine of faith from the Apostles, which was not so delivered.

§ 2. His second principle is this, " That no age " could innovate any thing, and withal deliver that " very thing to posterity as received from Christ by con- " tinual succession." He proves it thus: " Since man " is a rational creature, he must have some reason or " motive, good or bad, which he proposeth to himself " as an end to be atchieved by his action: and what- " ever his remote end is, his immediate end, in telling " posterity a late invented thing was held immediately " before, is to make them believe it. Wherefore, since " a seen impossibility cannot be a motive to one not " frantick, and since it is evidently impossible they " should make posterity believe a thing so universally " known to be false, as this must needs be, *&c* it is " as impossible this principle should faulter, as that the

" foregoing

" foregoing age ſhould conſpire to act without a mo-
" tive, or that the ſucceeding age ſhould believe what
" they know to be otherwiſe; that is, ſhould hold both
" ſides of a contradiction in a clear matter of fact."
The force of which is this, That it is impoſſible that any man not frantic ſhould attempt to innovate in matter of Chriſtian doctrine, becauſe the immediate end of ſuch an attempt muſt be to have this new doctrine believed, but it is impoſſible he ſhould attain this end, and impoſſible he ſhould not ſee that it is impoſſible to attain it: now, a ſeen impoſſibility is an end that cannot move any one that is not frantic; therefore no man that is not frantic can attempt to innovate in matter of Chriſtian doctrine. Thus he hath demonſtrated it impoſſible that there ſhould be any heretics, if a heretic be one that attempts to innovate in matter of Chriſtian doctrine: for if there be any ſuch attempters, they muſt be frantic; and if they be frantic, they can be no heretics: for hereſy implies a crime, but God will not impute the actions of madmen to them as faults. Again, ſuppoſe he that attempts to innovate be miſtaken (and I hope Mr. S. will grant that a heretic is fallible) and think that which he delivers as Chriſt's doctrine to be really ſo, tho' indeed it be not; why ſhould ſuch a perſon think it impoſſible to make men believe that to be received from Chriſt which he really thinks was received, and thinks he can make it appear that it was ſo? And if this be granted, then it is not impoſſible that man, tho' he be a rational creature, may attempt to innovate. And if ſo, then his ſecond principle is not proved. If Mr. S. had any regard to the noble ſcience of controverſy, (whereof he pretends to be ſo great a maſter) he would not bring ſuch triſling ſophiſms inſtead of demonſtrative proofs; and nothing leſs than a demonſtrative proof will ſerve to eſtabliſh any principle upon which a demonſtration is to be built.

Sect. IX. *The third anſwer to Mr. S.'s ſecond demonſtration.*

§ 1. Doctrines and practices which muſt be acknowledged to have been innovated, have made the ſame

fame pretence to uninterrupted tradition. And of this I ſhall give ſeveral inſtances; one among the Jews, the reſt among Chriſtians.

1*ſt*, I ſhall inſtance among the traditionary Jews, whoſe perſuaſion in our Saviour's time was, and ſtill is, that their oral doctrine, which they call their *Cabala*, hath deſcended to them from Moſes uninterruptedly. Now, here is the exiſtence of ſuch a perſuaſion as Mr. S. affirms to be "impoſſible without tradition's ever-in-"deficiency to beget it." And this perſuaſion of theirs is moſt exactly parallel with the pretenſions of the Romiſh church, according to Mr. S. For here's a multitude of traditionary Jews, manifoldly greater in proportion to the diſſenters in that church, than the Romiſh church is in compariſon to thoſe Chriſtians that diſſent from her. Joſephus tells us (*Antiq. Jud. l.* 13. *c.* 18.) that "the richer ſort were of the perſuaſion of the Sad-"ducees, but the multitude were on the Phariſees ſide." So that the Phariſees had this mark of the true church (as Bellarmine calls it) common to them with the church of Rome, that they were the greateſt number, and ſo they continue to this very day; inſomuch that altho' they do not call themſelves the Catholics, yet I am ſure they call all the Jews that do diſſent from them ſchiſmatics. Now, that the Sadducees were for the written law againſt oral tradition, is, I confeſs, no credit to us; but that our Saviour reproved the traditionary doctrines and practices of the Phariſees, becauſe by them they made void the written law, is much more to the diſcredit of the aſſerters of oral tradition. Both Romaniſts and Phariſees own alike a written doctrine; but then they both pretend the true ſenſe and explication thereof to have deſcended to them by oral tradition. For juſt as the traditionary Chriſtians do now, ſo Joſephus tells us (*ibid. l.* 17. *c.* 3. *& de bell. Jud. l.* 1. *c.* 4. *& l.* 2. *c.* 12.) the traditionary Jews of old, the Phariſees, did pretend by their oral tradition to interpret the law more accurately and exactly than any other ſect. In like manner he tells us (*Antiq. l.* 18. *c.* 2.) that "all things that "belonged to prayer and divine worſhip, were regulat-"ed and adminiſtered according to their interpretations "of the law." And they both agree in this, to *make void*

void the word of God by their tradition; which the Pharisees did no otherwise than Mr. S. does, by equalling oral tradition to scripture; nay preferring it above scripture, in making it the sole rule of faith, and interpreting the scripture according to it. Hence are those common sayings in the Talmud, and other Jewish books: "Do not think that the written law is the foundation, "but that the law orally delivered is the right foundation;" which is to say with Mr. S. that not the scripture, but oral tradition, is the true rule of faith. Again, "There is more in the words of the Scribes (*viz.* the "testifiers of tradition) than in the words of the written law." Again, "The oral law excells the written, "as much as the soul doth the body;" which accords very well with what Mr. S. frequently tells us, that the scripture without tradition is but a dead letter, destitute of life and sense. Hence also it is, that they required the people (as the traditionary church does now) to yield up themselves to the dictates of tradition, even in the most absurd things; as appears by that common saying among them: "If the Scribes say that the right hand is "the left, and the left the right (that bread is flesh, and "wine is blood) hearken to them;" that is, make no scruple of whatever they deliver as tradition, tho' never so contrary to reason or sense. And, lastly, the doctrines of the Pharisees were many of them practical; such were all those which concerned external rites and observances, as *washing of hands and cups*, &c. So that these Pharisaical traditions had also that unspeakable advantage which Mr S. says renders their traditions unmistakeable, that they were daily practised, and came down "clad in such "plain matters of fact, that the most stupid man living "could not possibly be ignorant of them." Therefore, according to Mr. S.'s principles, it was impossible that any age of the Jews should be persuaded that these things were commanded by Moses, and ever since observed, if they had not been so: and yet our Saviour denies these customs to have been of any such authority as they pretended.

§ 2. But I needed not to have taken all this pains to shew the agreement which is between the traditionary Jews and Papists; their own writers so liberally acknowledging

ledging it. Mr. White indeed says (*De fid. & theol. tract.* 1. § 6.) that "the faith of the Jews was not delivered "to them orally, but by writing." Than which nothing can be more inconsistent with his hypothesis: for if the Jewish faith was conveyed to them not orally, but by writing; then, either the Jewish church had no sufficient rule of faith, or else a writing may be such a rule. But other of their champions make great use of the parallel between the traditionary Jews and the Romish church to confirm from thence their own traditionary doctrines. Cardinal Perron hath a full passage to this purpose (*Rep. to K. James observ.* 3. *c.* 4.) "As this (says "he) is to preserve a sound and entire respect to the "majesty of the ancient Mosaic scripture, to believe and "observe not only all the things which are therein actually contained, but also those things which are "therein contained mediately and relatively, as the "doctrines of Paradise, *&c.* which were not contained "therein but mediately, and by the authority which it "gave to the disposition of the Patriarchal and Mosaic "tradition, preserved by heart, and in the oral doctrine "of the synagogue; so this is to preserve a sound and "entire respect to the majesty of the Apostolical scripture, to believe and observe all the things which it "contains, not only immediately, and by itself, but "mediately, and by reference to the Apostolical traditions; to which in gross and generally it gives the "authority of Apostolical doctrines, and to the church "the authority of guardian and depositary to preserve "and attest them." Voysin, in his observations upon Raymundus Martin (*Pugio fid. p.* 145.) tells us, that "as in the old law the great consistory at Jerusalem was "the foundation of the true tradition; so (says he) the "see of Rome is the foundation of our tradition. And "as the continual succession of the high priests and fathers among the Jews, was the great confirmation of "the truth of their traditions; so (says he) with us the "truth of our Catholic doctrine is confirmed by a continual succession of popes."

§ 3. From all this it appears, that the Pharisees among the Jews made the same pretence to oral tradition which the Papists do at this day, according to Mr. S.

And

And if so, then Mr. S.'s demonstration *à posteriori* is every whit as strong for the Jews against our Saviour, as it is for the Papists against the Protestants. For we find that, in our Saviour's time, it was then the present persuasion of the traditionary Jews, that their faith, and rites, and the true sense and interpretation of their written law, was descended from Moses and the prophets to them uninterruptedly; which we find was most firmrooted in their hearts. But the Jews had a constant tradition among them, that the Messiah was to be a great temporal prince: and tho' the letter of the prophecies concerning him might well enough have been accommodated to the low and suffering condition of our Saviour; yet they did infallibly know, that their Messiah was to be another kind of person, from "sense written "in their hearts," from the interpretation of those prophecies orally brought down to them, "from the pa-"triarchal and Mosaic tradition preserved by heart, "and in the oral doctrine of the synagogue, and from "the living voice of their church essential;" that is, the universal consent of the then traditionary Jews. If it be said, that the Jewish tradition did indeed bring down several doctrines not contained in scripture, of paradise, of hell, of the last judgment, of the resurrection, *&c.* (as Cardinal Perron affirms) but it did it not bring down this point of the Messiah's being a temporal prince; then, as Mr. S. asks us, *p.* 67. so the Jews does him, "By what virtue tradition brought down these other "points? and whether the same virtue were not pow-"erful to bring down this, as well as those?" Then he will ask him farther, "Is there not a necessary con-"nexion and relation between a constant cause, and its "formal effect; so that if its formal effect be points re-"ceived as delivered ever, the proper cause must be an "ever-delivery? whence he will argue from such an "effect to its cause for any particular point, and con-"sequently for this point that is in controversy between "Jews and Christians (concerning the Messiah's being "a temporal prince) in case it be a point held ever de-"livered:" but most certain it is, it was so held by the Jews in our Saviour's time, and hath been held so ever since to this day.

I shall not trouble the reader with transcribing the rest of this demonstration; only desire him, as he reads it over, to imagine, instead of Mr. S. a Pharisee demonstrating against one of Christ's disciples, the infallibility of the oral tradition of the Jews: and I doubt not, but he will find this demonstration, and every part of it, changing only the names, as forcibly concluding Christ not to be the Messiah, as it doth infer any point of Popery against the Protestants.

§ 4. Before I leave this instance of the Jewish tradition, I shall briefly consider what Mr. White hath offered by way of answer to it (*Apol. p.* 123, *&c.*) as, first, that "the matter of these traditions is nothing else but ex-"plications of scripture framed and invented by their "own Rabbins." So we say, that the Popish traditions are innovations. But then Mr. White and Mr. S. tell us, that they can demonstrate them to be descended from Christ and his Apostles; because it is the present persuasion of a multitude of Christians that they are so descended. In like manner, if this demonstration be good, the Jews can prove their traditions to be descended from Moses and the prophets. Secondly, he says, that "the "form of these traditions is more ridiculous than the "canting of gypsies, or the juggling of hocus-pocus; "because it consists in inventing the sense of the scrip-"ture from the mysteries, and numbers, and changes "of letters." This is a gross inexcusable mistake: for tho' the Jews have such a cabala, called *Gematry*, as this which Mr. White describes; yet that cabala which is argued in this instance, and which our Saviour reproves in the Pharisees by the name of *tradition*, is quite another thing, and, among the Jews writers, known by the name of the *unwritten* or *oral law*; which they say was delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai, and by him conveyed to Aaron, and Joshua, and the elders, and successively delivered down from one age to another; and at last by Rabbi Jehudah compiled into one volume, which they call *Mishna*, or δευτέρωσις. And this does not consist in the art of numbering, combining, or changing of letters, as Mr. White imagines. But suppose it did so, and were more ridiculous than he conceits it to be, the instance would be so much the more conclusive against

againſt them, if what they affirm be true, that oral tradition is infallible, and that the perſuaſion of a traditionary church in any age, that ſuch a doctrine deſcended to them from Chriſt or Moſes, be a demonſtration that it did ſo: for if this be ſufficient evidence, it is nothing to the purpoſe what the doctrine be, either for matter or form; for if it be once demonſtrated to have come from Chriſt or Moſes, it is, without any further diſpute, to be received as of divine authority. So that Mr. White quite alters the ſtate of the queſtion; which was not, Whether the Jewiſh cabala be abſurd and ridiculous? but, Whether the general perſuaſion of the Jews in any age, that it deſcended to them by uninterrupted tradition from Moſes, be a demonſtration that it did ſo? If it be, then the Jewiſh cabala is as demonſtratively of divine authority as the oral doctrine of the Papiſts. Thirdly, he ſays, "The cabala was a doctrine delivered to few, "and that with ſtrict charge to keep it from publicity, "and ſo communicate it again ſucceſſively to a ſelect "committee of a few: wherein (ſays he) you may ſee "as fair an opportunity for juggling and cozenage, as "in our caſe there is an impoſſibility." This, I think, is true of the cabala, which it ſeems Mr. White had only in his view; but is a horrible miſtake, if he ſpeaks of the oral law, which was contained in the Miſhna, and which this inſtance only intends. For of this Maimonides *(in præfat. ſum. Talmud.)* ſays expreſsly, that "in "every age, from the time of Moſes to Rabbi Jehudah, "who compiled the Miſhna, the oral law was publicly "taught; and that, after Rabbi Jehudah had compiled "it into one volume, the Iſraelites did generally write "out copies of it; and it was every where carefully "taught, for fear leſt the oral law ſhould, by forget-"fulneſs, be loſt among the Jews." So that, upon account of the publicneſs of the doctrine, there is as great an impoſſibility of juggling and cozenage in the caſe of the Jews as of the Romiſh tradition. Beſides was waſhing of hands and cups, which they alſo pretended to have come down to them from Moſes, and to have been conſtantly practiſed in every age, a ſecret thing? was it not a practical tradition, and performed in a ſenſible matter? If therefore no age can conſpire to impoſe up-

on the next in a plain cuſtom; and if an univerſal tradition of ſuch a thing cannot come in without ſuch a conſpiracy, how could this be the perſuaſion of any age, that waſhing of hands, *&c.* was preſcribed by Moſes, and practiſed in all ages, if it had not truly been ſo?

§ 5. 2*dly*, As for inſtances among Chriſtians, whereof many remain yet upon record; as, namely, the various and oppoſite traditions about the time of Eaſter, and concerning the baptiſm of heretics, and the apoſtolical tradition (as St. Auſtin calls it) concerning the admiſſion of infants to the communion; all which have been frequently urged in this controverſy, and none of them yet ſufficiently anſwered: I ſhall, to avoid tedioufneſs, paſſing by theſe, inſiſt only upon that of the *chiliaſt*; which, in Juſtin Martyr's time, was the perſuaſion of all orthodox Chriſtians; that is (in Mr. S.'s dialect) of all the holders to tradition. For if, notwithſtanding the perſuaſion of that age, that this doctrine was deſcended to them from the Apoſtles, it was not really ſo deſcended; then the perſuaſion of Chriſtians in any age, that a doctrine was brought down to them from the Apoſtles, is no demonſtration that it was ſo.

§ 6. To this inſtance Mr. White anſwers (*Apol. p.* 78. 79. *&c.*) by telling us, that Euſebius ſays, that this tradition ſprang from Papias, a good, but a credulous and ſimple man, who it ſeems was miſtaken in ſaying, that it was the Apoſtles doctrine. But, for all this, Juſtin Martyr ſays, it was received by all orthodox Chriſtians in his time, as a doctrine deſcended to them from the Apoſtles. And if Juſtin ſaid true, nothing can make more againſt their demonſtration of the infallibility of tradition, than the natural conſequence from theſe two ſayings of Euſebius and Juſtin; which is this, That the miſtake of one ſimple and credulous man may, in an age or two, give occaſion to the univerſal entertainment of a doctrine, as deſcended down to them from Chriſt and his Apoſtles, when there was no ſuch matter. Hath not Mr. White now done his rule of faith great ſervice by this anſwer? But it is according to his manner, in all his writings, to ſay any thing to remove a preſent objection, though never ſo much to the prejudice

dice of his main hypothesis: than which, I do not know any quality in a writer, which doth more certainly betrary the want either of judgment, or of sincerity, or of a good cause.

§ 7. And whereas he says, (*Apol. p.* 81.) that "Irenæus's testimony proves it to be no tradition: for he "sets down the supposed words of our Saviour, which "plainly shews it is a story, not a tradition; a traditi-"on being a sense delivered, not in set words, but set-"tled in the auditors hearts by hundreds of different "expressions explicating the same meaning:" When I consider this passage of Mr. White, I confess I cannot compliment him, and say, (as he makes his nephew do in the dialogue between them, *Rushworth dial.* 4. § 4.) "I cannot but applaud your discourse, it hath so pleas-"ing and attractive a countenance;" and again, *ibid.* "§ 5.) "I am not able to oppose what you say by any "weighty objection, your arguments being not only "strong and nervous, but of so comely and win-"ning a complexion, *&c.*" I cannot, I say, speak all this of his present argument; but I may deservedly apply to it the last part of his nephew's compliment, that it is an argument so framed, "as if, without any evi-"dence of its consequence, it would persuade men to "believe it." But to return an answer to this passage: It seems, according to Mr. White, that Irenæus was mistaken in the very nature of tradition: and if so learned a father was ignorant in the common rule of faith, "what can we (to use Mr. S.'s words, *p.* 39.) under-"takingly promise to weaker heads?" Mr. S. instanceth in the creed and ten commandments, as the principal traditions which parents teach their children; but now Mr. White can shew plainly, that these are no traditions, but stories; because "tradition is a sense deli-"vered not in set words, *&c.*" As if Christ and his Apostles could deliver no doctrine, unless they expressed the same thing an hundred different ways. But suppose they did so, which no man hath any reason to imagine, because a thing may be expressed as plainly by one way as by an hundred; can no man deliver this tradition who speaks it in any one of those expressions? If one should employ his servant to carry a message, and, be-

cauſe Mr. White thinks this neceſſary, ſhould ſettle the meaning of it in his heart, by telling him the ſame thing in an hundred ſeveral expreſſions; and the ſervant ſhould go and deliver this meſſage in one of thoſe very expreſſions that his maſter uſed to him, and ſhould ſay, theſe were his maſter's very words; would not this be well enough?

No; if he had come to ſuch a philoſopher as Mr. White, he would ſoon have given him to underſtand, that he was not fit to bring a meſſage, or to be credited in it, who had ſo little wit as not to know, that a meſſage is a thing not to be delivered in ſet words. And now, I would intreat Mr. White to reconcile himſelf in this matter to his friends. Mr. Ruſhworth ſays, (*Dial.* 1. § 6.) "It is impoſſible to put fully, and beyond all "quarrel, the ſame ſenſe in divers words:" which, if it be true, I would fain know what certain courſe Mr. White can preſcribe, "to explicate the ſame meaning "by hundreds of different expreſſions;" and, conſequently, how tradition can be infallibly conveyed, "by "ſettling the ſenſe of it in the auditors hearts," by ſuch variety of expreſſions. Mr. Creſſy likewiſe, a zealous aſſerter of tradition, does affirm, (*Exomolog. c.* 10. § 4.) that "the primitive churches were even to exceſs ſcru-"pulous in maintaining the very phraſes of traditionary "doctrines;" which, according to Mr. White, plainly ſhews theſe doctrines "to be ſtories, not traditions; "becauſe tradition is a ſenſe delivered not in ſet "words." The ſame author complains, (*ibid. c.* 19. § 2.) that "few among their learnedeſt maſters of con-"troverſy propoſe the points to be diſputed between "them and the Proteſtants, in the language of the "church." By which, I ſuppoſe, he does not mean, that theſe controvertiſts were to blame, in that they did not ſettle the ſenſe of theſe points by hundreds of different expreſſions explicating the ſame meaning, but that they did not keep to the words wherein the church had, in councils, or otherwiſe, if there be any other way, declared her ſenſe of thoſe points. Again, he ſays, (*ib. c.* 27. § 2.) that "St. Paul, referring to the "doctrine ſettled by oral inſtruction, to ſhew the uni-"formity of it every where, calls it *a form of whole-*

"*ſome*

" *some words.*" From whence we may conclude, either that St. Paul did not well to call the traditionary doctrine (as Mr. Creſſy ſays he does) *a form of words*; or elſe, which is more probable, that Mr. White is miſtaken in ſaying, that " a tradition is a ſenſe not deli-" vered in ſet words." Furthermore, the ſame Mr. Creſſy tells us, (*ibid. c.* 28. § 1.) that St. Auguſtine was careful, " not only to deliver traditional truths them-" ſelves, but the terms alſo in which thoſe truths were " conveyed to his times." But now Mr. White could have informed St. Auguſtine, that this officious care of his was not only ſuperflous, but pernicious to tradition.

§ 8. But to return to Juſtin's teſtimony; to which the ſum of Mr. White's anſwer is, that " Juſtin eſteemed it " not a point neceſſary to ſalvation, but rather a piece " of learning higher than the common; ſince he both " acknowledges other Catholics held the contrary, and " intitles thoſe of this perſuaſion κατὰ πάντα ὀρθογνώμονες, " right in all opinions; that is, wholly of his own mind." It is not material to my purpoſe, whether or not Juſtin looked upon this as a point neceſſary to ſalvation, ſo long as it is evident, that he looked upon it as a divine revelation, and part of the Chriſtian doctrine. And yet, it ſeems he thought it a point of more than ordinary importance, becauſe he joins it with the doctrine of the reſurrection; and ſays, that it was not diſowned by any but thoſe who alſo denied the reſurrection. But whereas Mr. White ſays, that " Juſtin acknowledges other Catholics " to have held the contrary," I hope to make it evident, from the ſcope and ſeries of his diſcourſe, that he acknowledges no ſuch thing; but that the plain deſign of his diſcourſe is, to ſhew that this doctrine was owned by all true Chriſtians. For when Trypho asks him, whether the Chriſtians did indeed believe that Jeruſalem ſhould be rebuilt? *&c.* he returns him this anſwer, (*Dial. cum Tryph. p.* 306. *edit. Lutet.* 1615,) " I am not " ſuch a wretch as to ſpeak otherwiſe than I think. I " have told thee before, that myſelf and many others " (as ye all know) are of the mind, that this will come " to paſs. But that many indeed of thoſe Chriſtians who " are [not] of the pure and pious perſuaſion do not own " this,

" this, I have intimated to thee." That the negative particle (though omitted in the copy) ought to be thus inserted, will be clear to any one that considers what follows: for after he had spoken of those who disown this doctrine, he immediately adds, by way of farther description of them, that though they are called Christians, yet in truth they are not Christians, in these words: " For of these, (*viz.* the disowners of this doctrine) " who are called indeed Christians, but are atheistical " and impious heretics, I have shewed thee, that they " teach in all points, blasphemous, atheistical, and ab- " surd things. But, that ye may know that I do not " say this for you only, I will, according to my ability, " compile all these passages which have passed between " us, into one piece; in which I will by writing make " profession of this very thing which I now declare to " you. For I do not chuse to follow men, or the doc- " trines of men; but God, and such doctrines as are " from him. And though you may have conversed with " some who are called Christians, and yet do not ac- " knowledge this; but even dare to blaspheme the God " of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of " Jacob; who also say, that there is no resurrection of " the dead, but that so soon as they die, their souls are " received into heaven; do not count these men Chri- " stians, no more than a man who considers things " rightly, would own the Sadducees, and such like sects, " to be Jews, *&c.*" But I myself, and as many Chri- " stians as are thoroughly of the right persuasion, do both " know, that there shall be a resurrection of the flesh, " and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which shall be " built, adorned, and enlarged, *&c.*" Can any thing be plainer, than that Justin endeavours by this discourse to satisfy Trypho, that this point they were speaking of was a divine doctrine, and owned to be so by all Christians, except such as did only bear the name and title of Christians, but were indeed blasphemous heretics, and deniers of the resurrection? By which character, that he intends to describe the impious sects of the Gnostics, will appear by and by. So that Mr. White must either allow the inserting of the negative particle, which Mr. Mede (*Nov. edit. p.* 664.) proves to have been omitted in the copy,

copy, or elſe acknowledge, that thoſe who are "Chriſti-
"ans only in name, but in truth are impious, blaſphe-
"mous, and abſurd heretics," may properly be ſaid to be of the pure and pious opinion of the Chriſtians. And if only theſe be the other Catholics, whom Mr. White ſays Juſtin acknowledges to have held contrary to the Millenaries, I am contented he ſhould make his beſt of them. If Mr. White ſhould blame the inſerting of the negative particle *not* into Juſtin's text, as too great a boldneſs with the fathers; it were eaſily anſwered, that the ſenſe evidently requires it: and in ſuch a caſe it is no boldneſs, but ſuch a liberty as the moſt learned of their own interpreters and commentators upon the fathers do frequently take. And as for Mr. S. if he takes offence at this, one may with reaſon, ſince the exigency of the ſenſe plainly requires the inſerting of it, demand of him (what he unreaſonably does of us in relation to all the affirmative propoſitions of ſcripture, *p.* 31.) to demonſtrate that the particle *not* was not left out of this clauſe of Juſtin by thoſe who tranſcribed the book. But, beſides the exigency of the ſenſe in this place, that the negative ought to have been inſerted, will appear by the reference which Juſtin makes in this paſſage to ſomething foregoing in the ſame dialogue. "I have (ſays he) de-
"clared to thee before, that myſelf and many others
"are of the mind that this will come to paſs. But that
"many indeed of thoſe Chriſtians who are [not] of the
"pure and pious perſuaſion do not own this, I have in-
"timated to thee. For of theſe, who are called indeed
"Chriſtians, but are atheiſtical and impious heretics, I
"have ſhewed thee, that they teach in all points, blaſ-
"phemous, atheiſtical, and abſurd things." In theſe words he plainly refers to ſome precedent paſſage; which, if it can be found, will be a certain key to open to us the ſenſe of this place. I know, that Mr. Mede, *(ibid)* perhaps not obſerving it, thought that paſſage to have been fraudulently expunged by the enemies of the Millennary opinion. But it ſeems to me to be ſtill extant: for I find, towards the beginning of this dialogue, after that Juſtin had endeavoured to prove at large out of ſcripture this glorious coming of Chriſt, and to refute thoſe who applied the texts produced by him to that purpoſe,

to

to Hezekiah; and to Solomon, whose falling off to idolatry he occasionally mentions; whereupon Trypho objects to him, That many who were called Christians, did also communicate in the idol-feasts: To this, I say, I find Justin returning this answer, *p.* 253. First, he denies not that there are such as these "who own themselves "Christians, and confess the crucified Jesus to be both "Lord and Christ, and yet teach not his doctrines, but "the doctrines of seducing spirits. But (says he) we "who are the disciples of the true and pure doctrine of "Jesus Christ, are from this very thing the more strengthened in our faith, and become more confirmed in the "hope which by him he hath declared to us. For now "we see those things visibly and effectually accomplished, which he beforehand told us would be done in his "name. For he said, *Many shall come in my name*, &c." By which hope, any one that reads the antecedents and consequents, will plainly see that Justin means the hope of the *millennium*, (which he had been speaking of before) and consequently of the resurrection, which he looked upon as having a strict connection with the doctrine of the *millennium*; because, as he tells us afterwards, this doctrine was denied by none but such as also denied the resurrection. And of these men his description runs on in these words: Πολλοὶ, &c. "Many (saith he) both are "and have been, that have come in the name of Jesus, "and taught both to speak and do atheistical and blasphemous things; and are by us denominated from "those men from whom each of their doctrines and opinions had its rise, [namely, as it follows, Marcionites, Valentinians, &c.] and all these in their several "ways teach men to blaspheme the creator of the universe, and the Christ whose coming was foretold by "him, and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. "But we have no communion with them, as knowing "them to be atheistical and impious, &c." This passage in hand, when I compare it with the text before quoted, and consider the words and characters of them both, I cannot but believe it the very same that he refers to in those words, "I have declared to thee, I have intimated to thee, &c." If so, the matter in controversy is clear, that the doctrine of the *millennium* was universal.

If

If it be not the same, I could wish to be shewed some other place in this dialogue where Justin makes any such declaration or intimation. In the mean while, by comparison of these places, it is evident there are but two sorts of men that Justin speaks of: First, who believe the *millennium:* " We the disciples τῆς ἀληθινῆς καὶ καθαρᾶς διδασκαλίας, of the true and pure doctrine, &c. *viz.* myself and many others;" again, " myself, and as many " Christians as are thoroughly ὀρθογνώμονες, of the right " persuasion." Secondly, who deny the *millennium:* " Many Christians," saith Justin. But what Christians? of a right persuasion? " That (saith he) I have signified " before. Τὰς γαρ, &c. For I have shewed thee of them " who are called Christians, but are indeed Atheists and " impious heretics, that they teach blasphemous, and a- " theistical, and absurd things." And true it is, he did shew before, that those who denied the *millennium*, were " many in number, and were called Christians, &c. but " were teachers of blasphemous and atheistical things, " &c. and known to be Atheists and impious, &c." But he shewed it of none other besides these. So that if this doctrine were likewise denied by " many Christians of " the pure and pious persuasion," then Justin Martyr had foully forgot himself: but if not, then it is plain, that the transcribers have wronged Justin, by leaving out a negative which ought to have been inserted. It is worth observing by the way, how Mr. White pleases himself with false and frivolous criticisms upon the words πολλὰς and ὀρθογνώμονες. False they are, as Mr. White shall know if he desires to hear any more of them; and frivolous they are rendered by my preceeding discourse: for which reason I say no more of them. But I think he may do well hereafter, as Mr. S. warily suggests, *p.* 68. not to engage himself, nor be hooked by others out of his own infallible way; but leave it wholly to the bird-witted heretics, as Mr. S. calls them, *p.* 69. to perch upon the specifical natures of words, as he does of things.

§ 9. Besides these instances I have given of doctrines and practices, which Mr. S. cannot deny to have been innovated, I might instance likewise in the chief points of Popery, and shew, that, for all their pretence to tradition, they are really innovations. But because this would

would engage me in tedious disputes about particular points, I will only single out one of their most fundamental doctrines, *viz.* that of transubstantiation; concerning which I shall shew, that notwithstanding it is the universal persuasion of the present Roman church, yet they have not, nor can have, any assurance, that it was the doctrine of Christ, and that it is descended to them by an uninterrupted tradition. I shall not at all contend against the word *transubstantiation*, which is generally acknowledged to be new; but only the thing signified by it, a substantial change of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. And this I might shew at large not to have been the doctrine of the ancient fathers. But because Mr. White, and Dr. Holden, and Mr. Cressy, do so frequently and confidently tell us, that nothing is to be reputed a traditionary doctrine, the contrary whereof hath been publicly held by any Catholic who continued afterwards uncensured, and in the communion of the church; therefore I shall content myself at present with one clear testimony, and that of a very eminent person in the church, St. Theodoret, concerning whom Pope Leo (in an epistle to him, at the end of Theodoret's works) gives this testimony, that, "in the "judgment of the apostolic see, he was free from all "stain of heresy." The passage I intend is in his dialogues, between a Catholic, under the name of *Orthodoxus*, and *Eranistes*, who sustained the person of an heretic. Eranistes maintaining, that the body of Christ was changed into the substance of the divinity, he illustrates it by this similitude. "As (says he, *Dial.* 2.) "the symbols of the Lord's body and blood are one "thing before the invocation of the priest, but, after "the invocation, are changed, and do become another "thing; so the body of our Lord, after his ascension, "is changed into the divine substance." To which Orthodoxus returns this answer. "Thou art caught in "thine own net: because the mystical symbols after "consecration do not pass out of their own nature; "for they remain in their former substance, figure, and "appearance, and may be seen and handled even as "before." He does not only, in express words, deny the substance of the symbols to be changed; but the occasion

caſion upon which theſe words are brought in, and the ſcope of them, if they be of any force againſt the heretic's illuſtration, renders them uncapable of any other ſenſe. When Mr. S. hath anſwered this teſtimony, I have more for him.

That which I mainly urge againſt this doctrine, is the monſtrous abſurdities and contradictions contained in it, together with the neceſſary conſequence of them. Several of the abſurdities of it are well brought together by Scotus, who tells us, (*Diſtinct. l.* 4. *diſt.* 10. *qu.* 1. *n.* 3.) that to prove the poſſibility of Chriſt's body being contained under the ſpecies of bread and wine, many things muſt be proved which ſeem to involve a contradiction: As, 1. "That one quantum (or extended "body) may be together in the very ſame place with "another. 2. That a leſs quantum may be together "in the ſame place with a greater;" *i. e.* a body of leſs extenſion may occupy not only the ſame, but as much room as a body of greater extenſion does; which is to ſay no more but this, that a body leſs than another may be as great as that other, even whilſt it is leſs than it. 3. "That a greater quantum may be together with "every part of a leſs quantum;" *i. e.* a body that is greater than another, may be as little as the leaſt part of that other body which is leſs than it. 4. "That a "ſubject may be without quantity;" *i. e.* there may be a body which hath no kind of magnitude. 5. "That "a body may be ſomewhere where it was not before, "without changing its place;" *i. e.* a body may be removed to another place whilſt it remains ſtill in the ſame place. 6. "That a quantum may be without any quan-"titative mode;" *i. e.* a body may be extended without any manner of extenſion. "The poſſibility of all "which (he ſaith, and I am very much of his mind) it "would be too tedious a work to prove;" and therefore he only attempts to prove the two laſt; which, in all reaſon, is work enough for one man. All theſe ſeeming contradictions, as he modeſtly calls them, are by his own acknowledgment involved in this doctrine. To theſe I might add many more; as, How a thing can be ſaid to be changed into another thing which did exiſt before? How a body can be preſent in a place after the

manner of a ſpirit? (and yet this they affirm concerning the preſence of Chriſt's body in the ſacrament. One might as well ſay, that ſnow is black, but not after the manner of blackneſs, but in the way of whiteneſs; which is to talk nonſenſe after the manner of ſenſe.) How the whole body of Chriſt can be contained under the leaſt ſenſible part of the ſpecies of bread? (as is generally affirmed: nay, and Scotus adds, that the whole body is under every little part in its full proportion; for he ſays expreſsly, (*ib. qu.* 1. *n.* 11.) that "the head and the foot "of the body of Chriſt are as far diſtant from one ano-"ther in the ſacrament, as they are in heaven;" as if one ſhould ſay, that a body, all whoſe parts lie within the compaſs of a ſmall pin's head, may yet within that little compaſs have parts two yards diſtant from one another: and, laſtly, How the ſenſible ſpecies of bread, *e. g.* quantity, whiteneſs, ſoftneſs, *&c.* can exiſt without any ſubject? To affirm the poſſibility of which, as generally they do, is to ſay, that there may be quantities of white and ſoft nothings; for this is the plain Engliſh of that aſſertion, "That ſenſible ſpecies may exiſt with-"out a ſubject;" which being ſtripped of thoſe terms of art, *ſpecies* and *ſubject*, that do a little diſguiſe it, it appears to be plain nonſenſe.

Now, the proper and neceſſary conſequence of this doctrine is, to take away all certainty, and eſpecially the certainty of ſenſe. For if that which my ſight, and taſte, and touch, do all aſſure me to be a little piece of wafer, may, notwithſtanding this, be fleſh and blood, even the whole body of a man; then, notwithſtanding the greateſt aſſurance that ſenſe can give me, that any thing is this or that, it may be quite another thing from what ſenſe reported it to be. If ſo, then farewell the infallibility of tradition, which depends upon the certainty of ſenſe. And, which is a worſe conſequence, if this doctrine be admitted, we can have no ſufficient aſſurance, that the Chriſtian doctrine is a divine revelation: for the aſſurance of that depending upon the aſſurance we have of the miracles ſaid to be wrought for the confirmation of it, and all the aſſurance we can have of a miracle depending upon the certainty of our ſenſes, it is very plain, that that doctrine which takes away the certainty

certainty of ſenſe, does in ſo doing overthrow the certainty of the Chriſtian religion. And what can be more vain, than to pretend, that a man may be aſſured, that ſuch a doctrine is revealed by God, and conſequently true, which if it be true, a man can have no aſſurance at all of any divine revelation? Surely nothing is to be admitted by us as certain, which being admitted, we can be certain of nothing. It is a wonder, that any man who conſiders the natural conſequences of this doctrine, can be a Papiſt, unleſs he have attained to Mr. Creſſy's pitch of learning; who, ſpeaking of the difficult arguments wherewith this doctrine was preſſed, ſays plainly, (*Exomol. c.* 73. § 7.) "I muſt anſwer freely "and ingenuouſly, that I have not learned to anſwer "ſuch arguments, but to deſpiſe them." And, if this be a good way, whenever we have a mind to believe any thing, to ſcorn thoſe objections againſt it which we cannot ſolve; then the Chriſtian religion hath no advantage above the vileſt enthuſiaſms; and a Turk may maintain Mahomet and his Alcoran, in oppoſition to Chriſt and his doctrine, againſt all that Grotius, or any other, hath ſaid, if he can but keep his countenance, and gravely ſay, "I have not learned to anſwer ſuch arguments, but "to deſpiſe them."

§ 10. I will add one inſtance more in another kind, to ſhew the uncertainty of oral and practical traditions; and that ſhall be the tradition concerning Pope Joan; than which ſcarce any thing was ever more generally received in the hiſtorical kind. Many and great authors affirm it, as teſtifiers of the general fame. None ever denied it till the reformers had made uſe of it to the diſadvantage of Popery. Since that time, not only Papiſts deny it, but ſeveral of our own writers ceaſe to believe it. Phil. Bergomenſis tells the ſtory thus: "*Anno* "858, John, the 7th Pope, *&c.* The tradition is, that "this perſon was a woman, *&c.*" Here is an oral tradition. He concludes thus: "In deteſtation of whoſe "filthineſs, and to perpetuate the memory of her name, "the Popes, even to this day, going on proceſſion with "the people and clergy, when they come to the place "of her travail, *&c.* in token of abomination, they "turn from it, and go a by-way; and, being paſt that

" deteſtable place, they return into the way, and finiſh " their proceſſion." Here is one practical tradition. " And, for avoiding of the like miſcarriages, it was de- " creed, that no one ſhould thereafter be admitted into " St. Peter's chair, *priuſquam per foratum ſedem futuri* " *Pontificis genitalia ab ultimo Diacono Cardinale attrecta-* " *rentur.*" Here is another with a witneſs. Sabellicus relates the ſame, (*Ennead.* 6. *l.* 1.) and moreover ſays, that " this porphyry chair was, in his time, to be " ſeen in the Pope's palace." He adds indeed, that " Platina thinks, that this tradition of Pope Joan was " not faithfully delivered to poſterity. But however, " (ſays he) ſuch a tradition there is concerning the firſt " practical tradition." Platina ſays, that " he may " not deny it." For the ſecond, he thinks " the chair " rather deſigned for a ſtool, for another uſe, *&c.*" He concludes, " Theſe things which I have related are " commonly reported, yet from uncertain and obſcure " authors: therefore I reſolved (ſays he) briefly and " nakedly to ſet them down, leſt I ſhould ſeem too ob- " ſtinately and pertinaciouſly to have omitted that which " almoſt all affirm." It is no wonder, that he ſays the authors of this report were uncertain and obſcure, ſince ſo very few writ any thing in that age. But, ſuppoſe none had writ of it, ſo long as he acknowledges it to have been a general oral tradition, atteſted by a ſolemn and conſtant practice, it has, according to Mr. S.'s principles, greater certainty that if it had been brought down to us by a hundred books written in that very age. So that here is an oral and practical tradition, continued, we are ſure, for ſome hundreds of years, preſerved and propagated by a ſolemn practice of the Popes, clergy, and people of Rome, in their proceſſions, and by a notorious cuſtom at the election of every Pope; and in a matter of ſo great importance to their religion, (the honour of the ſee of Rome, and the uninterrupted ſucceſſion from St. Peter, being ſo nearly concerned in it,) that, had it been falſe, they had been obliged, under pain of damnation, not only not to have promoted it, but to have uſed all means to have diſcovered the falſity of it. Therefore Mr. S. is bound, by his own principles, either to allow it for a truth, or elſe to give an account

account when and how it began; which may poſſibly be made out by "we metaphyſicians," (as he ſtyles himſelf and his ſcientifical brethren, *p.* 340.) but I aſſure him it is paſt the skill of note-book learning, *p.* 336

Sect. X. *The fourth anſwer to his ſecond demonſtration.*

§ 1. IT is not the preſent perſuaſion of the church of Rome, nor ever was, that their faith hath deſcended to them by oral tradition as the ſole rule of it. And this being proved, the ſuppoſition upon which his demonſtration is built, falls to the ground.

And for the proof of this I appeal to the decree of the council of Trent (*Decret. primum quartæ ſeſſ.*) in which they declare, that becauſe the "Chriſtian faith "and diſcipline are contained in written books and "unwritten traditions, *&c.* therefore they do receive "and honour the books of ſcripture, and alſo traditi-"on, *pari pietatis affectu ac reverentia*, with equal pious "affection and reverence;" which I underſtand not how thoſe do who ſet aſide the ſcripture, and make tradition the ſole rule of their faith. And conſonantly to this decree, the general doctrine of the Romiſh church is, that ſcripture and tradition make up the rule of faith. So the Roman catechiſm (ſet forth by order of the council of Trent) ſays (*in præfat.*) that "the ſum of the "doctrine delivered to the faithful is contained in the "word of God, which is diſtributed into ſcripture and "tradition." Bellarmine (*De verbo Dei, &c. l.* 4. *c.* 12.) ſpeaks to the ſame purpoſe, that "the ſcripture is a "rule of faith, not an entire, but partial one. The en-"tire rule is the word of God, which is divided into "two partial rules, ſcripture and tradition." According to this the adequate rule of faith is the word of God, which is contained partly in ſcripture, and partly in the tradition of the church. And that ſcripture is looked upon by them as the principal rule and primary foundation of their faith, and tradition as only ſupplying the defects of ſcripture, as to ſome doctrines and rites not contained in ſcripture, muſt be evident to any one that has been converſant in the chief of their controverſial di-

vines. Bellarmine (*De verbo Dei non scripto. l.* 4. *c.* 9.) where he gives the marks of a divine tradition, speaks to this purpose, that that which they call a divine tradition, is such a doctrine or rite as is not found in scripture, but embraced by the whole church; and for that reason believed to have descended from the Apostles. And he tells us farther (*ibid. c.* 11.) that the Apostles committed all to writing which was commonly and publicly preached; and that all things are in scripture which men are bound to know and believe explicitly: but then he says, that there were other things which the Apostles did not commonly and publicly teach; and these they did not commit to writing, but delivered them only by "word of mouth to the prelates and "priests, and perfect men of the church." And these are the Apostolical traditions he speaks of. Cardinal Perron says (*Reply, observat.* 3. *c.* 4.) that "the scripture is the foundation of the Christian doctrine, either "mediately or immediately. And that the authority of "unwritten tradition is founded in general on these sentences of the Apostle, *Hold the traditions*, &c. 2. Thess. "ii. 15. again, *The things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, commit to faithful men*, &c." 2. Tim. ii. 2. And that "the authority of the church to "preserve, and especially to declare these, is founded "in this proposition, *viz. That the church is the pillar "and ground of truth.*" 1 Tim. ii. 15. So that, according to him, the primary rule of faith is the scripture, "in "which the authority of tradition is founded." Mr. Knott (*Charity maintained, c.* 2. § 1.) says expressly, "We acknowledge the holy scripture to be a most perfect rule, for as much as a writing can be a rule; we "only deny that it excludes either divine tradition, "though it be unwritten; or an external judge, to keep, "to propose, to interpret it, *&c.*" So that, according to him, scripture is a perfect rule; only it does not exclude unwritten tradition, *&c.* By which that he does not understand, as Mr. S. does, a concurrent oral tradition of all the same doctrines which are contained in scripture, but other doctrines not therein contained, is plain from what he says elsewhere (*Reply to Mr. Chillingworth, c.* 2. § 170) "We do not distinguish tradi-

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" tion from the written word, becauſe tradition is not " written by any, in any book or writing; but becauſe " it is not written in the ſcripture or Bible." Bellarmine (*De verbo Dei*, &c. *l.* 4. *c.* 2.) alſo ſays the ſame. And as for the interpreting of ſcripture, he tells us, that this is not the office of a rule, but of a judge. " There is, " (ſays he, *Charity maintained*, *c.* 2. § 3.) a great and " plain diſtinction between a judge and a rule: for as " in a kingdom the judge hath his rule to follow, which " are the received laws and cuſtoms; which are not " fit or able to declare, and be judges themſelves, but " that office muſt belong to a living judge: ſo the holy " ſcripture is and may be a rule, but cannot be a judge." Here he makes the ſcripture as much a rule for matters of faith, as the laws of the land are for civil matters. And, in his *Reply to Mr. Chillingworth*, he hath a chapter of above 150 pages, the title whereof is, *Scripture is not the only rule of faith*; which (had he with Mr. S. believed oral tradition to be the ſole rule of faith) had been as abſurd, as it would be to write a book, to prove that Turks are not the only Chriſtians in the world. Mr. Creſſy likewiſe (not very conſiſtently with himſelf) lays down this concluſion (*Exomolog. c.* 20.) " The entire rule " of faith is contained not only in ſcripture, but likewiſe " in written tradition."

§ 2. Now, all this is as contrary as can be to Mr. Ruſhworth's new rule of faith. Therefore Mr. White ſays (*Tabul. ſuffrag. p.* 96.) " They ſpeak ill who teach " that ſome things are known in the church from ſcrip- " ture, ſome by tradition." And Dr. Holden (in oppoſition to thoſe who make ſcripture any part of the rule of faith) advances one of the moſt wild and uncharitable poſitions that ever I yet met withal, *viz.* (*Analyſ. fid. l.* 1. *c.* 6.) That " if one ſhould believe all the ar- " ticles of the Catholic faith, *&c.* for this reaſon, be- " cauſe he thought they were all expreſsly revealed in " ſcripture, or implicitly contained, ſo as they might " be deduced from thence, and would not have believ- " ed them, had he not judged that they might be e- " vinced from ſcripture: yet this man could be no true " Catholic; becauſe (as he tells us afterwards, *c.* 8.) " we muſt receive the Chriſtian doctrine as coming to " us

" us by tradition; for only by this means (excluding " the ſcriptures) Chriſt hath appointed revealed truths " to be received and communicated." In the mean time, Cardinal Perron (unleſs he altered his mind) is in a ſad caſe, who believed the authority of tradition itſelf, for this reaſon, becauſe it was founded in ſcripture.

§ 3. And this fundamental difference about the rule of faith, between the generality of their divines and Mr. S.'s ſmall party, is fully acknowledged by the traditioniſts themſelves. Dr Holden ſays (*l.* 1. *c.* 9.) that " their divines who reſolve faith according to the com- " mon opinion, do inevitably fall into the ſhameful " circle [of proving the divine authority of the ſcrip- " tere by the church, and the infallibility of the church " back again by the ſcripture] becauſe they dare not " build their faith upon the natural evidence and cer- " tainty of tradition." So that Dr. Holden's way of reſolving faith, is different from the common opinion of their divines; which, he ſays, (*l.* 1. *c.* 3.) " does not " differ from the opinion of thoſe who reſolve their " faith into the private ſpirits:" and this (according to Mr. White, *Extaſ. p.* 70.) is the very way of the Calviniſts, and of the abſurdeſt ſects. Nay, Mr. White ſays farther, *ibid.* that he will be content to " ſuffer all the " puniſhment that is due to calumniators, if the Roman " divines (he there ſpeaks of) do not hold the ſame " rule of faith with the Calviniſts, and all the abſurdeſt " ſects." So that it ſeems that the Calviniſts, *&c.* do not in their rule of faith differ from the Papiſts, but only from Mr. White, Mr. S. *&c.* Now, the divines he there ſpeaks of, are the cenſors of doctrines at Rome, according to whoſe advice his infallible holineſs, and the Cardinals of the inquiſition, do uſually proceed in cenſuring of doctrines. Concerning theſe divines he goes on to expoſtulate in this manner (*ibid. p.* 73.) " Shall we endure theſe men to ſit as cenſors and judges " of faith, who agree with heretics in the very firſt " principles which diſtinguiſh Catholics from here- " tics?" Again, *p.* 144. " Theſe are thy gods, O " Rome! upon theſe thou dependeſt, whilſt prating " ignorance triumphs in the Roman college." And he ſays the ſame likewiſe of the generality of their ſchool-

divines,

divines, whom he calls ſceptics, becauſe they do not own his demonſtrative way: inſomuch that he tells us, *p.* 64. that "few ſound parts are left uninfected with "this plague of ſcepticiſm;" that "this is an univerſal "gangrene," *p.* 149. that "there are but few that go "the way of demonſtration, and theſe are either wea-"ried out, or elſe live retiredly, or deſpair of any reme-"dy of theſe things," *p.* 67. 68. And indeed all along that book he bemoans himſelf and his traditionary brethren as a deſolate and forlorn party, who have truth on their ſide, but want company and encouragement. So he tells us, *p.* 101. that "the true ſcientifical di-"vines dare not profeſs their knowledge, leſt they "ſhould be expoſed by the ſophiſters of their church to "the deriſion and ſcorn, either of their judges, or of "the people."

§ 4. So that, upon examination of the whole matter, it appears that Mr. S.'s demonſtration proceeds upon a falſe ſuppoſition, that it is the perſuaſion of their preſent church that tradition is the ſole rule of faith. For there is no ſuch matter; unleſs Mr. S. mean by their church, a few private perſons, who are looked upon by thoſe who have the chief power in their church, as heretical: as we may reaſonably conjecture by the proceedings at Rome againſt Mr. White; many of whoſe books are there condemned, as "containing things manifeſtly "heretical, erroneous in the faith, raſh, ſcandalous, "ſeditious, and falſe reſpectively, *&c.*" *(Exetaſ. p.* 9.) and all this done, notwithſtanding that the chief ſubject of thoſe books is the explication and defence of this moſt Catholic principle, "That oral tradition is the "only rule of faith." To ſum up then the whole buſineſs: If nothing be to be owned for Chriſtian doctrine, (as the traditioniſts ſay,) but what is the general perſuaſion of thoſe who are acknowledged to be in the communion of the Roman Catholic church; then much leſs can this principle, "That oral tradition is the ſole "rule of faith," which is pretended to be the foundation of the whole Chriſtian doctrine, be received as deſcended from Chriſt and his Apoſtles; ſince it is ſo far from being the general perſuaſion of that church at the preſent, that it has been, and ſtill is generally diſowned.

ed. But Mr. White has a salvo for this: For altho' he grants, (*Apol. p.* 38.) that very many of their school-"men maintain, that tradition is necessary only for "some points not clearly expressed in scripture; "whence (he says) it seems to follow, that they build "not the whole body of their faith upon tradition: "yet (he tells us) there is a vast difference betwixt re-"lying on tradition, and saying or thinking we do "so." Suppose there be; yet I hope, that mens saying that they do not rely on tradition as their only rule, is a better evidence that they do not, than any man's surmise to the contrary is, that they do, though they think and say they do not; which is, in effect, to say, that they do, though we have as much assurance as we can have, that they do not. Besides, how is this rule "self-evident to all, even to the rude vulgar, as to its "ruling power," (as Mr. S. affirms it is,) when the greatest part even of the learned among them think and say, that it is not the only rule? But Mr. White (*ibid. p.* 39.) endeavours to illustrate this dark point by a similitude, which is to this sense: As the sceptics, who deny this principle, "That contradictions cannot be "true at once;" yet in their lives and civil actions proceed as if they owned it; so the schoolmen, though they deny tradition to be the only rule of faith, yet by resolving their faith into the church, which owns this principle, they do also in practice own it, though they say they do not. So that the generality of learned Papists are just such Catholics as the sceptics are dogmatists; that is, a company of absurd people, that confute their principles by their practice. According to this reasoning, I perceive the Protestants will prove as good Catholics as any; for they do not only think and say, that tradition is not the rule of faith; but that they practically rely upon it, Mr. S. hath passed his word for them: for he assures us, *p.* 30. & 31. (and we may rely upon a man that writes nothing but demonstration,) that, "if we look narrowly into the bottom of our "hearts, we shall discover the natural method of tra-"dition to have unawares settled our judgments con-"cerning faith; however, when our other concerns a-"wake design in us, we protest against it, and seem per-"haps

" haps to our unreflecting ſelves to embrace and hold " to the mere guidance of the letter of ſcripture." So that, in reality, we are as good Catholics, and as true holders to tradition, as any Papiſts of them all, at the bottom of our thoughts, and in our ſettled judgment: however we have taken up an humour to proteſt againſt it, and may ſeem perhaps to our unreflecting ſelves to be Proteſtants.

§ 5. Thus much may ſuffice to have ſpoken to his two great arguments; or, as he (good man) unfortunately calls them, demonſtrations, *p.* 173. which yet, to ſay truth, are not properly his, but the author of Ruſhworth's dialogues; the main foundation of which book is the ſubſtance of theſe demonſtrations. Only, before I take leave of them, I cannot but reflect upon a paſſage of Mr. S.'s, wherein he tells his readers, *p.* 163. that they are not " obliged to bend their brains to ſtudy his book " with that ſeverity as they would do an Euclid;" meaning perhaps one of Mr. White's Euclids; for it does not appear by his way of demonſtration, that ever he dealt with any other. As for the true Euclid, I ſuppoſe any one that hath taſted his writings, will, at the reading of Mr. S.'s, unbend his brains without bidding, and ſmile to ſee himſelf ſo demurely diſcharged from a ſtudy ſo abſurd and ridiculous.

Sect. XI. *Concerning ſome other advantages of tradition*, &c.

§ 1. I Should now take into conſideration his ninth diſcourſe, in which he pretends to " open the in- " comparable ſtrength of the church's human authority, " and the advantages which accrue to it by the ſuper- " natural aſſiſtances of the Holy Ghoſt;" but that there is nothing material in it which hath not been anſwered already. Only, I deſire him to explain how the ſupernatural aſſiſtances of the Holy Ghoſt can, according to his principles, add to our aſſurance of the certainty of tradition; becauſe we can have no greater certainty of the ſupernatural aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt, than we have, that there is an Holy Ghoſt; and of this we can have no certainty, (according to Mr. S.) but by

by tradition, which conveys this doctrine to us. And if tradition of itself can infallibly assure us, that there are supernatural assistances of the Holy Ghost, then a man must know, that tradition is infallible, antecedently to his knowledge of any supernatural assistance. And if so, what can any supernatural assistance add to my assurance of the certainty of tradition, which I do suppose to be infallible before I can know of any supernatural assistance? Can any thing be more ludicrous, than to build first all our certainty of the assistance of the Holy Ghost upon the certainty of tradition; and then afterwards to make the certainty of tradition to rely upon the assistance of the Holy Ghost? as if that could contribute to our assurance of the certainty of tradition; which, unless tradition be first supposed certain, is itself wholly uncertain.

§ 2. The conclusion of this ninth discourse is somewhat ecstatical; possibly from a sudden disorder of his fancy upon the contemplation of his own performances, to see what a man he has made himself, (with the help of Rushworth's dialogues) or rather, what his party has made him by the office they put upon him: for it seems (by his telling, *p.* 165. and 166.) Mr. Cressy, and the rest, are ordained to cajole the fools, leaving him the way of reason and principles; and that himself is chosen out to demonstrate to the wise, or those who judge of things *per altissimas causas*. In the discharge of which glorious office, he declares, that he intends no confutation of those authors which Mr. Cressy and others have meddled with: "yet if any will be so charitable "as to judge he hath solidly confuted them, because "he hath radically and fundamentally overthrown all "their arguments, *&c.* he shall rejoice, and be thank-"ful." That the intelligent reader (for he writes to none but such, *p.* 159.) may also rejoice with him, I shall recite the whole passage: for it is thick of demonstration, and as likely as any in his book to have the *altissimas causas* contained in it.

§ 3. "It would require a large volume to unfold par-"ticularly how each virtue contributes to shew the in-"errable indeficiency of tradition, and how the princi-"ples of almost each science are concerned in demon-"strating

" its certainty. Arithmetic lends her numbering and " multiplying faculty, to scan the vast number of testi- " fiers: Geometry her proportions, to shew a kind of " infinite strength of certitude in Christian tradition, a- " bove those attestations which breed certainty in hu- " man affairs: Logic, her skill, to frame and make us " see the connexions it has with the principles of our " understanding: Nature, her laws of motion and acti- " on; Morality, her first principle, That nothing is " done *gratis* by a cognoscitive nature; and that the " body of traditionary doctrine is most conformable to " practical reason: Historical prudence clears the im- " possibility of an undiscernible revolt from points so " descended, and held so sacred: Politics shew this to " be the best way imaginable to convey down such a " law as it concerns every man to be skillful in: Me- " taphysics engages the essences of things, and the very " notion of being, which fixes every truth; so establish- " ing the scientifical knowledge which springs from each " particular nature, by their first causes or reasons, ex- " empt from changes or motion: Divinity demonstrat- " eth it most worthy God, and most conducive to bring " mankind to bliss: Lastly, Controversy evidences the " total uncertainty of any thing concerning faith, if this " can be uncertain; and makes use of all the rest, to " establish the certainty of this first principle." *p.* 93. A very fit conclusion for such demonstrations as went before. It is well Mr. S. writes to none but intelligent readers; for were it not a thousand pities, that so manly, and solid, and convincing a discourse as this should be cast away upon fools?

Sect. XII. *Mr. S.'s corollaries considered.*

§ 1. AS for his corollaries, supposing them to be rightly deduced from his former discourse, they must of necessity fall with them; for they signify nothing, but upon this supposition, that his foregoing discourses are true. And yet this being granted, it were easy to shew that most of them are grosly faulty. For, first, several of them are plainly coincident. The second, *viz.* " None can with right pretend to be a church, but the

" followers of tradition," is the very same in sense with the 11th, *viz.* " No company of men hang together " like a body of a Christian commonwealth or church, " but that which adheres to tradition." So likewise the 12th and 14th are contained in the 15th; the 16th and 17th, in the 19th; the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th, in the 21st; and the 32d and 34th, in the 31st. Secondly, Divers of them are manifestly absurd; as the 12th, 13th, 14th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th; the sum of which is, That there is " no arguing against tradition from " scripture, or the authority of the church, or fathers " and councils, or from history and testimonial writings, " or from contrary tradition, or reason, or any instan- " ces whatsoever;" which is as much as to say, If this proposition be true, " That tradition is certain," then it cannot, by any kind of argument, be proved to be false. But is this any peculiar consectary from the truth of this proposition? Doth not the same follow from every proposition, That if it be true, it cannot be proved to be false? Yet no man was ever yet so frivolous, as to draw such a consequence from the supposed truth of any proposition. His 23d also is singularly absurd, That " there is no possibility of arguing at all against traditi- " on rightly understood, or the living voice of the Ca- " tholic church, with any shew of reason." These are large words. It might have contented a reasonable man to have said, that no good argument could be brought against it; but he is jealous of his hypothesis, and can never think it safe till it be shot-free. Nor will that content him; but it must be also impossible for any one to make a shew of shooting at it. This were, I confess, a peculiar privilege of Mr. S.'s discourses above other mens, if they were, as he says, by evidence of demonstration so secured, that not only no substantial argument could be brought against them, but that even the most subtile schoolman of them all should not be able to come near them with so much as a *Videtur quod non.* But it may be, he means no more by this corollary, than what he said in the 18th, *viz.* That " no solid argu- " ment from reason can be brought against tradition." If so, then the sense of his 23d corollary must be this, That there is no possibility of arguing at all against tradition

dition with any ſolid ſhew, or ſubſtantial ſhadow of reaſon; which would be a little inconvenient. I will inſtance but in one more, his 40th; which is this, "The "knowledge of tradition's certainty is the firſt know- "ledge or principle in controverſial divinity, *i. e.* with- "out which nothing is known or knowable in that ſci- "ence:" which is to infer, that becauſe he hath with much pains proved the certainty of tradition, therefore it is ſelf-evident, *i. e.* needed no proof. Nay, it is to conclude the preſent matter in controverſy, and that which is the main debate of his book, to be the firſt principle in controverſial divinity, *i. e.* ſuch a propoſition as every one ought to grant before he can have any right to diſpute about it. This is a very prudent courſe, to make begging the queſtion the firſt principle in controverſy; which would it but be granted, I am very much of his mind, that the method he takes would be the beſt way to make controverſy a ſcience; becauſe he that ſhould have the luck or boldneſs to beg firſt, would have it in his power to make what he pleaſed certain.

§ 2. Were it worth while, I might farther purſue the abſurdities of his corollaries; for they are not ſo terrible as he makes ſhew of, by his telling Dr. Cauſabon, *p.* 330. that "*Sure-footing*, and its corollaries, may put him out "of his wits:" which though intended for an affront to the Doctor, yet it may be mollified with a good interpretation; for if the reading of wild and fantaſtical ſtuff be apt to diſorder a very learned head, then ſo far Mr. S.'s ſaying may have truth in it.

It remains only that I requite his 41ſt corollary, not with an equal number, but with two or three natural conſectaries from the doctrine of his book.

1. No man can certainly underſtand the meaning of any book whatſoever, any farther than the contents of it are made known to us by a concurrent oral tradition: for the arguments whereby he and Mr. Ruſhworth endeavour to prove it impoſſible without tradition to attain to the certain ſenſe of ſcripture, do equally extend to all other books.

2. The memory of matters of fact done long ago may be better preſerved by general rumour, than by public records: for this is the plain Engliſh of that aſſertion,

That oral tradition is a better and more secure way of conveyance than writing.

3. That the generality of Papists are no Christians: for if, as he affirms, tradition be the sole rule of faith, and those who disown this rule be *ipso facto* cut off from the root of faith, *i. e.* unchristianed; and if, as I have shewn, the generality of Papists do disown this rule, then it is plain that they are no Christians.

PART IV.

Testimonies concerning the rule of faith.

Sect. I. *Mr. S.'s testimonies examined.*

§ 1. THUS far, in the way of reason and principles: The rest is note-book learning, which, he tells us, *p.* 337. he is "not much a friend to:" and there is no kindness lost; for it is as little a friend to him, and his cause, as he can be to it. I shall first examine the authorities he brings for tradition; and then produce express testimonies in behalf of scripture. In both which I shall be very brief; in the one, because his testimonies require no long answer; in the other, because it would be to little purpose to trouble Mr. S. with many fathers; who, for ought appears by his book, is acquainted with none but Father White; as I shall shew hereafter. By the way, I cannot much blame him for the course he uses to take with other mens testimonies; because it is the only way that a man in his circumstances can take: otherwise nothing can be in itself more unreasonable, than to pretend to answer testimonies by ranking them under so many faulty heads; and having so done, magisterially to require his adversary to vindicate them, by shewing that they do not fall under some of those heads, though he have not said one word against any of them particularly: nay, though he have not so much as recited any one of them; for then the trick would be spoiled, and his Catholic reader, who perhaps may believe him in the general, might see reason not to do so, if he should descend to particulars; which,

which, as he well obſerves, *p.* 161. would make his "diſcourſe to look with a contingent face."

§ 2. I begin with his three authorities from ſcripture; which when I conſider, I ſee no reaſon why he, of all men, ſhould find fault with my Lord Biſhop of Down's diſſuaſive, *p.* 320. for being ſo "thin and ſlight in ſcrip-"ture citations." Nor do I ſee how he will anſwer it to Mr. Ruthworth, for tranſgreſſing that prudent rule of his, (*Dial.* 2. § 14.) *viz.* That "the Catholic ſhould "never undertake to convince his adverſary out of ſcrip-"ture, *&c.*" For which he gives this ſubſtantial rea-ſon, *ib.* "Becauſe this were to ſtrengthen his opponent "in his own ground and principle, *viz.* That all is to "be proved out of ſcripture;" which he tells us pre-ſently after is no more fit to convince, than "a beetle "is to cut withal;" meaning it perhaps of texts ſo ap-plied as theſe which follow. *This ſhall be to you a direct way, ſo that fools cannot err in it*, Iſ. xxxv. 8. *This is my covenant with them, ſaith the Lord, My ſpirit which is in thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, ſhall not depart from thy mouth, and from the mouth of thy ſeed, and from the mouth of thy ſeed's ſeed, from henceforth for ever*, Iſ. lix. 21. *I will give my law in their bowels, and in their hearts will I write it*, Jer. xxxi. 33. From which texts if Mr. S. can prove tradition to be the only rule of faith, any better than the philoſophers ſtone, or the longitude, may be proved from the firſt chapter of Geneſis, I am content they ſhould paſs for valid teſti-monies; though I might require of him, by his own law, before theſe texts can ſignify any thing to his pur-poſe, to demonſtrate that this is the traditionary ſenſe of theſe texts, and that it hath been univerſally in all ages received by the church under that notion; and then to ſhew how it comes to paſs that ſo many of the fathers, and of their own commentators, have interpreted them to another ſenſe; and, laſtly, to ſhew how ſcripture, which has no certain ſenſe but from tradition, and of the ſenſe whereof tradition cannot aſſure us, unleſs it be the rule of faith; I ſay, how ſcripture can prove tradi-tion to be the rule of faith, which can prove nothing at all, unleſs tradition be firſt proved to be the rule of faith.

This I take to be as shameful a circle as that wherewith Dr. Holden upbraids the generality of his brethren.

§ 3. I proceed to his authorities from fathers and councils; all which, not one of them excepted, he hath taken out of Mr. White's *Tabulæ suffragiales*, without the least acknowledgment from whom he had them. And that it might be evident that he had not consulted the books themselves for them, he hath taken them with all their faults, and with the very same errors of citation which Mr. White had been guilty of before him. So that, though he is pleased to say of himself, *p.* 239. that "he is a bad transcriber," yet I must do him that right, to assure the reader that he does it very punctually and exactly.

§ 4. He begins with councils; of which, he tells us, "he will only mention three in several ages."

The first is the first synod of Lateran. One might have expected, after he had told us he would mention three in several ages, he should have produced them according to the order of time, and have begun with the council of Sardica, which was near 300 years before the Lateran. But there was a good reason why the Lateran should be first produced, *viz.* because it is mentioned before the other in Mr. White's book. Well: but what says this synod? "We all confess unanimously, and "consequently with one heart and mouth, the tenets "and sayings of the holy fathers; adding nothing, sub-"stracting nothing of those things which are delivered "us by them: and we believe as the fathers have be-"lieved; we preach so as they have taught." The force of which testimony Mr. S. lays upon the word *delivered*, as if that word, where-ever it is met with in councils or fathers, must needs be understood of oral delivery: whereas it is a general word, indifferently used for conveyance, either by writing, or word of mouth. In this place it plainly refers to the writings of particular fathers, out of whom a long catalogue of testimonies against the heresy of the Monothelites had been read just before this declaration of the synod. Now, what signifies this to oral tradition's being the rule of faith, that this synod declares her faith, in opposition to the heresy of the Monothelites, to be consonant in all things to those

thoſe teſtimonies which had been produced out of the fathers?

The next is the council of Sardica; out of an epiſtle of which council he cites theſe words: "We have received this doctrine; we have been taught ſo; we "hold this Catholic tradition, faith, and confeſſion." Which are general words, and indifferently applicable to oral tradition, or writing, or both, But be they what they will, Mr. S. ought not to have been ignorant, that this council was rejected by St. Auſtin, and other orthodox fathers; as Binius acknowledges, (*Concil. tom.* 1.); and, which is more, that the latter part of this epiſtle, out of which part Mr. S. cites theſe words, which contains a confeſſion of faith, is, by Baronius, *anno* 347, and, after him, by Binius, proved to have been ſurreptitiouſly added. For though it be found in Theodoret, and mentioned by Sozomen; yet Baronius thinks, that it was the Arian confeſſion, compoſed by the falſe ſynod of Sardica which ſat at the ſame time; and that Sozomen lighting upon it, perhaps miſtook it for the confeſſion of the orthodox ſynod of the ſame name. However that be, he proves out of Athanaſius, and from the teſtimony both of the Eaſtern and Weſtern biſhops, that the council of Sardica "did not ſo much as add one "word or title, no nor ſo much as explain any thing "in the Nicene faith." But Mr. White ſays nothing of this; and therefore Mr. S. could not, who is no ſpeculator in theſe matters, but only, as a teſtifier, delivers down theſe authorities to us as he received them by hand from Mr. White; and if the word *tradition* be but in them, they are demonſtrative.

As for his teſtimonies from the ſecond council of Nice, (which he calls the ſeventh general council) who pretended their doctrine of image-worſhip to have deſcended to them by an uninterrupted tradition, and proved it moſt doughtily by texts of ſcripture ridiculouſly wreſted, by impertinent ſayings out of obſcure and counterfeit authors, and by fond and immodeſt ſtories (as is acknowledged by Pope Adrian VI. *Quodlibet* 6. *cited by Eſpencæus in* 2. *epiſt. ad Tim. c.* 4.) of apparitions and womens dreams, *&c.* for which I refer the reader to the council itſelf; which is ſuch a meſs of fopperies, that if

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a general council of Atheists had met together with a design to abuse religion, by talking ridiculously concerning it, they could not have done it more effectually: I say, as for his testimonies from this council, I shall refer Mr. S. to that Western council under Charles the Great, which a little after at Francfort condemned, and also fully confuted the decisions of this council, calling their pretended tradition of image-worship *putidissimam traditionem*, "a most stinking tradition."

These are his authorities from councils: "Where "(says he) we see general councils relying on the teach- "ing of the fathers or foregoing church, and on the "church's tradition as their rule, *&c.*" Where does he see any such matter? or where does he see general councils? Was the council of Lateran a general one? Or was the council of Sardica? If it was, let him shew how the second of Nice could be the seventh general council. Mr. White must write more explicitly, and say which are general councils, which not; otherwise he will lead his friends into dangerous mistakes.

§ 4. "After ancient councils, (not so ancient nei- "ther) let us (says he) give a glance at fathers." *Glance* is a modest word, and yet I doubt whether ever the fathers had so much as that from him. Before I speak particularly to his testimonies from the fathers, I shall mind him of what Mr. Rushworth says in general, *(Dial.* 3. § 13.) *viz.* that "he who seeks tradition in the fa- "thers, and to evince it by their testimony, takes an "hard task upon him, *&c.*" Again, *ibid.* "As in o- "ther points, so even in this of the resolution of faith, "as doctors seem to differ now-a-days, so might the fa- "thers also." If this be true, Mr. S. is not likely by a few testimonies out of the fathers to prove, that tradition is the sole rule of faith. But let us see what he has done towards it.

He begins with a saying of Pope Celestine to the fathers of the Ephesine council. "Now therefore we "must act with a common endeavour to preserve things "believed and retained to this very time by succes- "on from the Apostles." Binius's other reading [of διδαχῆς for διαδοχῆς] quite spoils the force of this citation which Mr. S. puts upon the word *succession*. But

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read it how he will, why may not the Christian doctrine be said to come by succession from the Apostles, when it is transmitted to us by scripture, as well as when by oral tradition? I am sure the same Celestine, in an epistle to Cyril, commends him for defending the faith by scripture; "This (says he) is a great triumph of our "faith, to demonstrate our opinions so strongly, and to "over-throw the contrary, by testimonies from scrip-"ture." And neither in this epistle, nor the other, does he make any mention of oral tradition.

Next he cites that known place in Irenæus: "But "what if the Apostles had not left us in the scriptures, "ought we not to follow the order of tradition? *&c.*" This makes clearly against him; for it implies, that now the Apostles have left us the scriptures, we ought to follow them. The other passage he cites out of Irenæus, *lib.* 1. *c.* 3. is a clear eviction that he did not consult the book. For he puts two sayings together, which he had met with in Mr. White, immediately one after the other; and because Mr. White had cited *lib.* 1. *c.* 5. for the first saying, and brought in the other immediately upon it with an *Et rursus*, "Again, *&c.*" therefore Mr. S. (who is of a right traditionary temper, which is, to take things easily upon trust himself, and require demonstration from others) concluded, that these sayings were in the same place, though in truth they are in several books. As for the testimony itself, there is nothing in it to Mr. S.'s purpose besides the word *tradition*, which Irenæus does often apply to scripture as well as oral tradition; and there is nothing in this place to determine it to oral tradition.

His testimonies out of Origen will do him less stead: for every one that hath been conversant in the writings of that father, knows what he means by the church's tradition preserved by order of succession, *viz.* the mystical interpretation of the scripture, which (he says) were delivered by the Apostles to the governors of the church, and by them down from hand to hand. If this be the tradition Mr. S. contends for, Origen is at his service; if it be not, I assure him he is not for his turn.

Next comes Tertullian, concerning whom (as also Origen) the Papist upon occasion thinks it enough to reply

ply in St. Hierom's word *(Adverſ. Helvid.)* " As for " Tertullian, I have nothing to ſay of him, but that he " is not a man of the church," Whatever he was, theſe are his words, " If thou beeſt but a Chriſtian, believe " what is *traditum*, delivered." And here's nothing again but the word *delivered*; which (as I have ſaid) is indifferent to written or oral tradition, if the circumſtances do not determine it to one, as here they do (very unlikely for Mr. S.) to the ſcripture. For he diſputes here againſt Marcion, who denied the fleſh of Chriſt; and who, to maintain that, denied his nativity, and expunged the whole hiſtory of it out of the goſpel*; " But " (ſaith Tertullian) by what authority doeſt thou this? " If thou be a prophet, foretell ſomething; if an Apoſtle, " preach publicly: if Apoſtolical, be of the Apoſtles " mind; if no more but a Chriſtian, believe what is de- " livered." And where delivered, but in thoſe inſtruments or books of the goſpel, out of which (as Tertullian immediately before tells us) Marcion had made bold to expunge this ſtory?

As for his teſtimonies out of Athanaſius, the two firſt of them prove nothing, but that faith comes down from our anceſtors, or was by them delivered to us; which no body denies: nor is there a word in either of them concerning oral, in oppoſition to written tradition. The third teſtimony is out of an epiſtle to Epictetus, to whom Athanaſius, writing concerning thoſe who held Chriſt's body to be conſubſtantial with his divinity, tells him, this was ſo groſs a conceit, that it needed no ſolicitous confutation; but that it would be a ſufficient anſwer to ſay in general, " The orthodox church was not of that " mind; our fathers did not think ſo." From whence Mr. S. infers, that " tradition is held by him a ſole ſuf- " ficient rule of faith, and the only anſwer to be given " why we reject points from faith, *&c.*" But if he had conſulted the book, he would not have inferred, that this was " the only anſwer to be given, *&c.*" for it immediately follows, " But (leſt from our being wholly ſi- " lent, the inventers of evil things ſhould take occaſion to " be

* *Iis opinor conſiliis, tot originalia inſtrumenta Chriſti delere Marcion auſus eſt, ne caro ejus probaretur. Ex qua, ero te, autoritate, &c.*

" be more impudent, it will be good to recite a few paſ-
" ſages out of ſcripture, *&c.*" And from thence he confutes them at large. It was ſo groſs an error, that he thought it might be ſufficient, without bringing particular arguments out of ſcripture againſt it, to ſay, that it was contrary to the ancient faith: but yet, leſt they ſhould (if he had ſaid no more) have taken boldneſs from thence, and thought that nothing more could be ſaid againſt it; therefore he confutes it from particular texts of ſcripture. And what, in his opinion, was the ſufficient rule of faith, Mr. S. might have ſeen at the beginning of this epiſtle, from theſe words: " That faith which
" was profeſſed by the fathers in that council (*viz.* the
" Nicene) according to the ſcripture, is to me ſufficient,
" *&c.*" It ſeems that ſcripture was to him the rule and ſtandard whereby to judge even the creeds of general councils.

Mr. S. ſays he will be ſhorter in the reſt. And ſo will I: for what is to be ſaid to teſtimonies brought at a venture; when he that brings them, had he read the books themſelves, could not have had the face to have brought them? Such is this out of Clem. Alexand. (*Stromat. l.* 7.) " As if one of a man becomes a beaſt, like thoſe in-
" fected with Circe's poiſon; ſo he hath forfeited his be-
" ing a man of God, and faithful to our Lord, who
" ſpurns againſt eccleſiaſtical tradition, and leaps into
" opinions of human election." Mr. S. knows whoſe way of quoting this is, to pick a bit out of the midſt of the text that ſounds ſomething towards his purpoſe, and leave out the reſt, which would make it evident to be meant juſt contrary. Yet I cannot charge this wholly upon Mr. S. whoſe implicite faith, were it not for his culpable ignorance, might excuſe him. But for his ſeducer, Mr. White, how he can acquit himſelf of ſo foul an imputation, I leave it to any ingenuous Papiſt to judge, when I have nakedly ſet the whole paſſage before him. Clement, ſpeaking of heretics who relinquiſh the ſcripture, or abuſe it, by wreſting it to their luſts, ſays,
" Men who deal in matters of higheſt importance, muſt
" need commit great errors, if they do not take and
" hold the RULE OF FAITH from truth itſelf. For
" ſuch men having once deviated from the right way,
" do

" do likewiſe err in moſt particulars; probably becauſe " they have not the faculty of diſtinguiſhing truths and " falſhoods perfectly exerciſed, to chuſe what ought to " choſen: for, if they had this, they would be ruled by " the divine SCRIPTURES. [Therefore, as if any of " mankind ſhould become a beaſt, in ſuch ſort as thoſe " who were φαρμαχθεῖσιν, bewitched by Circe; even ſo " he hath loſt his being a man of God, and abiding " faithful to the Lord, who hath ſpurned againſt the " tradition of the church, and skipped into the opini- " ons of human ſects, ἀιρέσεων,] (not of human election, " as Mr. S. blindly following Mr. White, does moſt " abſurdly tranſlate it): but he that hath returned from " his errors, and hearkened to the SCRIPTURES, and " conformed his life to the truth, is as it were advan- " ced from a man to a God." At the ſame rate he goes on for ſeveral pages together, taking the ſcriptures for an indemonſtrable principle, from which all divine doctrines are to be demonſtrated, and for the criterion whereby they are to be tried; and charges the heretics in ſuch words as we cannot find fitter for our adverſaries: " As (ſays he) naughty boys ſhut out their ſchool- " maſter, ſo theſe drive the prophecies out of the church, " ſuſpecting that they will chide and admoniſh them; " and they patch together abundance of falſhoods and " fictions, that they may ſeem RATIONALLY not to " admit the ſcriptures." Again, ſpeaking of thoſe heretics affronting the ſcriptures, he tells us, " they oppoſe " the θεῖα παραδόσις, divine tradition, with human doc- " trines, δι' ἑτέρωνε παραγχειρήσεων, by other traditions [de- " livered from hand to hand] that they may eſtabliſh a " ſect or hereſy." Again, he ſays, " they adulterate " the truth, and ſteal the rule of faith, &c. but for O- " RAL frauds they ſhall have WRITTEN puniſh- " ments." But enough of this. Whoſoever deſires to ſee more of it, let him read on, where theſe men, to their own ſhame, have directed us, and ſee whether any Proteſtant can ſpeak more fully and plainly in this controverſy. The whole truſt of the Papiſts is upon the equivocal ſenſe of the word *tradition*. Which word is commonly uſed by the fathers to ſignify to us the ſcripture or divine tradition, as Clement here calls it: but the

the Papists understand it of their unwritten tradition; and to this they apply all those passages in the fathers where tradition is honourably mentioned. So Mr. S. deals with us in the testimonies I have already examined: and there is nothing of argument in those few which remain, but from the ambiguity of this word: which I need not shew of every one of them in particular; for whosoever shall read them with this key, will find, that they are of no force to conclude what he drives at.

§ 5. As for his citations out of the council of Trent, by which he would prove it to be the persuasion of their present church, that tradition is the sole rule of faith, I have already shewn, that that council hath declared otherwise, and is otherwise understood by the chief of their own writers. And therefore he did prudently to conceal, in an *&c.* those choaking words, in which the council declares itself to "receive and honour, with equal pious "affection and reverence, the books of scripture and "unwritten traditions." And, after a deal of shuffling, what a pitiful account is it that he at last gives of that council's putting scripture constantly before tradition; because scripture being interpreted by tradition, is of the same authority, "as if an Apostle or an Evangelist "were present; and therefore no wonder they honour "scripture-testimony so as to put it before tradition?" which is to say, that because scripture is subordinate to tradition, and to be regulated by it, therefore it deserves to be put before it. Besides, if scripture and tradition be but several ways of conveying the evangelical and apostolical doctrine, why should he imagine an Evangelist or Apostle to be more present by the scripture than by oral tradition; especially if it be considered, that he supposes scripture to be an uncertain, and tradition an infallible way of conveying this doctrine?

Sect. II. *The testimonies on the behalf of scripture.*

§ 1. ALL that now remains, is, to confirm the precedent discourse, by testimonies of the most eminent persons of the church in several ages. In which I shall not need to be large, being so happily prevented by

that full account which is given of the ſenſe of the ancients in this matter, in the anſwer to *Labyrinthus Cantuarienſis*; which Mr. S. may, if he pleaſe, conſult for his farther conviction.

§ 2. I begin with the hiſtorical account which Euſebius gives of committing the goſpel to writing; which is to this purpoſe (*Hiſt. eccleſ. l. 2. c.* 14.) *viz.* that "the "Romans were not content with the doctrine preached, "unleſs it were alſo committed to writing; and there- "fore did earneſtly beg of Mark, Peter's companion, "that he would leave them a monument in writing, of "that doctrine which had been delivered to them by "word of mouth. And this was the occaſion of the "writing of Mark's goſpel. And when Peter did un- "derſtand, that this work was publiſhed, being ſuggeſt- "ed by the divine revelation of the Holy Spirit, it is "ſaid, he was very much pleaſed with the ready and "earneſt deſire of thoſe perſons; and that, by his au- "thority, he confirmed this writing, to the end that it "might be every where read in the church." As for St. Matthew and St. John, he tells us (*ibid. l. 3. c.* 18.) that "of all the diſciples, they two only have left mo- "numents in writing; of whom it is alſo reported, that "they betook themſelves to write, being drawn there- "to by neceſſity. Matthew, after he had preached the "word of God to the Jews, and was reſolved to go to "other nations, wrote his goſpel in the language of "his country; and thus, by the diligence and pains of "writing, did abundantly ſupply the want of his pre- "ſence to thoſe whom he left. And when Mark and "Luke had publiſhed their goſpel, it is reported, that "John (who always uſed to preach the word without "writing it) being at length wrought upon by the ſame "reaſon, did betake himſelf to write." From this account it is clear, that the Apoſtle thought it neceſſary, for the preſervation and ſure conveyance of the Chriſtian doctrine, that it ſhould be put into writing; and that they judged this a better way to ſupply the want of their preſence, than oral tradition. Therefore the ſame author tells us (*ibid. c.* 31.) that "the diſciples, who "immediately ſucceeded the Apoſtles, as they travelled "to preach the goſpel to thoſe who had not yet heard

"the

" the word of faith, did, with great care, alſo deliver to " them the writings of the holy Evangeliſts." Again (*ibid. c.* 30) that " Ignatius, as he travelled towards " Rome, where he was to ſuffer, exhorted the churches " of every city, to hold faſt the tradition of the Apoſtles; " which (as alſo by writing he teſtified) for the greater " ſecurity, he held neceſſary to be copied in writing."

§ 3. That the heretics of old made the ſame pretence which the Papiſts make now, of oral tradition in oppoſition to ſcripture, the ſame Euſebius tells us; and withal, that books are a ſufficient confutation of this pretence. " Thoſe (ſays he, *ibid. l.* 5. *c.* 27.) who were of the " hereſy of Artemon, ſaid, that all their forefathers, and " the Apoſtles themſelves, had received and taught the " ſame things which they alſo did, and had preſerved " the true teaching unto the time of Victor Biſhop of " Rome; whoſe ſucceſſor, Zephyrinus, corrupted it. " And this (ſaith he) would have great probability, " were it not firſt of all contradicted by the ſcripture; " and next if there did not remain the writings of other " brethren, much more ancient than Victor's time, " *&c.* in the books of all whom Chriſt's divinity is ac- " knowledged." And afterwards he tells us, that theſe heretics did change and corrupt the ſcriptures, to bring them to their opinions. So M. S. tells us, that the outward letter of ſcripture ought to be corrected by tradition, and ſenſe written in mens hearts.

St. Hierom alſo tells us (*Com. in Iſa. c.* 9.) that " the " heretics were wont to ſay, We are the ſons of the " wiſe, who did from the beginning deliver down to " us the apoſtolical doctrine;" but he adds, that " the " true ſons of Judah adhere to the ſcripture."

§ 4. That ſcripture is ſufficiently plain in all things neceſſary.

St. Chryſoſtom (*in 2 Theſſ. c.* 2. *hom.* 4.) " All things " in the divine ſcriptures are plain and ſtraight. What- " ſoever things are neceſſary, are manifeſt."

St. Auſtin, having ſpoken of the profoundneſs of ſcripture, adds (*Epiſt.* 3.) " Not that thoſe things which " are neceſſary to ſalvation are ſo hard to be come at; " but (ſaith he) when one hath there attained faith,

" without which there is no pious and right living, " there are beſides many dark and myſterious things, " *&c.*" Again (*ibid.*) " The manner of ſpeech in ſcrip- " ture, how eaſy is it to all, tho' few can penetrate to " the bottom of it? Thoſe things which it plainly con- " tains, it ſpeaks without diſguiſe, like a familiar friend, " to the heart of the learned and unlearned." How will Mr. S. reconcile this with his great exception a- gainſt ſcripture? And what theſe things are, which are plainly contained in ſcripture, the ſame father tells us elſewhere, in theſe words: (*De doct. Chriſt. l.* 2. *c.* 9.) " Among theſe things which are plainly ſet down in " ſcripture, all thoſe things are to be found which com- " prehend faith and good manners." The ſame St. Au- ſtin (as alſo Clement in the book which Mr. White quot- ed) for the underſtanding of obſcure texts of ſcripture, directs us not to tradition, but to the plain text, with- out which, he expreſsly ſays (*De unitate eccl. c.* 5.) " there would be no way to underſtand them."

§ 5. That ſcripture is ſo plain, as to be fit to deter- mine controverſies.

Juſtin ſure thought ſo, when diſputing with Trypho, concerning a point wherein the Jew had tradition on his ſide, he told him, " he would bring ſuch proofs [to the " contrary] as no man could gainſay. Attend (ſays he) " to what I ſhall recite out of the holy ſcriptures; " proofs which need not to be explained, but only to " be heard." Mr. White might have found likewiſe much to this purpoſe in his Clement.

But, not to tire my reader in a point which the an- cients abound with, I ſhall only produce the judgment of Conſtantine, in that ſolemn oration of his to the council of Nice (*Theodoret. hiſt. lib.* 1. *c.* 7.) where- in he bewails their " mutual oppoſitions, eſpecially in " divine things;" concerning which, they had the doc- trine of the Holy Spirit recorded in writing: " For " (ſays he) the books of the Evangeliſts and Apoſtles, " and the oracles of the old prophets, do evidently " teach us what we ought to think of the divine Ma- " jeſty. Therefore, laying aſide all ſeditious conten- " tion, let us determine the matters in queſtion by te-

" ſtimonies

" ſtimonies out of the divine writings." Not a word of any other tradition but ſcripture, which was held evident enough in thoſe days, though now Mr. S. tells us, it is not ſufficient to decide that controverſy about the divinity of Chriſt.

§ 6. Laſtly, That ſcripture is the rule of faith.

Irenæus, *(l. 3. c. 1.)* " The method of our ſalvation " we have not known by any other but thoſe men by " whom the goſpel came to us; which then they preach- " ed; but afterwards, by the will of God, delivered it " to us in the ſcriptures, to be for the future the foun- " dation and pillar of our faith."

St. Cyprian the church hath ever held a good Catholic; yet Mr. S. takes notice, *p.* 314. that he erred in a point of faith; and perhaps the rather, becauſe Mr. Ruſhworth had told him, that he was not theirs in this controverſy: " For (ſays he, *Dial.* 3. § 13.) St. Cypri- " an ſeems to think, that the reſolution of faith was to " be made into ſcripture, and not into tradition." But that we may not ſeem to accept of this courteſy from him, nor yet wholly to deſpiſe it, I ſhall offer this one teſtimony inſtead of many, out of that father: who being oppoſed with an argument from tradition, demands, *(Epiſt.* 74.) " Whence have you that tradition? comes " it from the authority of the Lord, and of the goſpel, " or from the epiſtles of the Apoſtles? for God teſti- " fies, that we are to do thoſe things which are written, " *&c.* If it be commanded in the goſpel, or contained " in the epiſtles or acts of the Apoſtles, then let us ob- " ſerve it as a divine and holy tradition."

Hilary *(ad Conſtant.)* commends Conſtantius the Emperor " for regulating his faith only according to thoſe " things which are written." And to oblige him to deſerve this commendation, he adds, " He who refuſes " this, is antichriſt; and who diſſembles in it, is ana- " thema."

Optatus, concerning the controverſy with the Donatiſts, *(lib. 5. de ſchiſm. Donat.)* asks, " Who ſhall be " judge?" and anſwers himſelf, " The Scriptures." Which he illuſtrates by the ſimilitude of a father, who delivered his will orally to his children while he was living;

living; but when he was dying, caused it to be written in lasting tables, to decide all controversies that might happen among them after his death. This passage is large, and it is obvious to apply it.

Basil, maintaining the doxology as it was used in his days, says, *(De Spirit. Sancto, c. 7.)* "Thus we received "it from our fathers;" but adds immediately, "This "is not enough for us, that it is the tradition of the "fathers, for they followed the authority of the scri- "ptures, making its testimonies the principles upon "which they built." He has indeed, in the same book, *c.* 27. a passage, much insisted on by the Papists, concerning unwritten traditions; but withal, he says those traditions were secretly conveyed; which makes all the rest of no use to Mr. S.

Chrysostom (*Hom.* 8. *in Epist. ad Heb. c.* 5.) having mentioned several heresies, directs how they may be avoided, *viz.* "By attending to the faith delivered, and "looking upon all that disagrees from that, as adulte- "rate. For (says he) as those who give rules, do not "put men upon a curious inquiry after many measures, "but bid them keep to the rule given; so is it in opi- "nions. But no body will attend to the scriptures: "if we did, we should not only not fall into errors our- "selves, but also rescue those that are deceived." Again, *(Hom.* 52. *in Joh.)* "If we would be thorough- "ly conversant in the scriptures, we should be instruct- "ed both in right opinions and a good life." Again, (*Hom.* 33. *in Act. Apost.*) "Among the many sects "of Christians, it will be easy to judge of the right, if "we believe the scriptures, because they are plain and "true. If any one agree with these, he is a Christian; "if he contradicts them, he is far from this rule."

St. Austin *(De bapt. cont. Donat. l.* 2. *c.* 6.) calls the scripture the divine balance for the weighing of doctrines. Again, "The holy scripture (says he) fixeth "the rule of our doctrine." And accordingly himself uses it, both in his dispute with Maximinus, to whom he says, (*contr. Max. l.* 3.) "Neither ought I now to "alledge the Nicene council, nor thou that of Arimi- "num; for neither am I bound to the authority of the "one,

" one, nor thou of the other. Let us both conteſt with " the authorities of ſcripture, which are witneſſes com- " mon to us both;" and alſo againſt the Donatiſts in theſe words, *(De unitate eccl. c.* 16.) Let them, if they " can demonſtrate their church, not by the talk and ru- " mours [or oral tradition] of the Africans, not by the " councils of their own Biſhops, not by the books of " their diſputers, not by deceitful miracles, *&c.* but by " the preſcript of the law, prophets, *&c. i. e.* by all " the canonical authorities of the holy books."

Hierom ſaith, *(Comment. in Agg. c.* 1) " Of thoſe " things which, without the authorities and teſtimo- " nies of the ſcripture, men invent of their own heads " as from apoſtolical tradition, they are ſmitten with " the ſword of God."

Theophilus Alexander, whom Hierom hath tranſ- lated, calls ſcripture more than once " the rule," and the teſtimonies of it " the firm foundations of doctrine." *(Paſchal. l.* 3.) And again ſaith, (*l* 2.) " It comes from " a demoniacal ſpirit, that men follow the ſophiſms of " human minds, and think any thing divine that wants " the authority of ſcripture."

Theodoret *(Hæret. fabul. l.* 5.) charges all hereſies upon the not following of ſcripture; which he calls the " inflexible rule of truth." Again, " We have learn- " ed the rule of opinions from the divine ſcripture."

After the fathers, I ſhall produce the teſtimonies of two eminent perſons of later times, Gerſon and Lyra.

Gerſon, in his book *of the trial of doctrines, part* 1. *conſid.* 2. hath this remarkable paſſage: " In the trial of " doctrines, that which is firſt and principally to be " conſidered, is, Whether a doctrine be conformable " to the holy ſcripture? *&c.* The reaſon of this is, " Becauſe the ſcripture is delivered to us as a SUF- " FICIENT and INFALLIBLE RULE " for the government of the whole eccleſiaſtical body, " and its members, to the end of the world. So that " it is ſuch an art, ſuch a rule or exemplar, that any " other doctrine which is not conformable to it, is to " be renounced as heretical, or to be accounted ſuſpi- " cious, or not at all appertaining to religion." A- gain, *(De diſtinct. verar. viſion. à falſis.)* " It is evi- " dent

" dent how pernicious the rejection of the holy scrip-
" ture is, and how certain a preparatory for the recep-
" tion of antichrist." Once more, *(Serm. in die circ-*
" *cumcis. &c.)* " What mischief, what danger, what
" confusion hath happened through contempt of the
" holy scripture, (which sure is sufficient for the go-
" vernment of the church, else Christ must have been
" an imperfect lawgiver,) let us ask experience, *&c.*"

Lyra also writes thus, *(Prolog. de lib. Bib. &c.)* " As
" in philosophy, truth is discovered by reducing things
" to their first and self-evident principles; so in the
" writings delivered by the holy doctors, truth is dis-
" covered as to matters of faith, by reducing them to
" the canonical scriptures."

SIR,

You know how easy it were to swell up a large volume with testimonies to this purpose; especially if I should take the course that Mr. White does, to hale in quotations, though never so impertinent; or use the wretched importunity which Mr. S. does, to persuade them to be pertinent. But these testimonies, which I have nakedly set down, leaving them to speak for themselves, are enough to satisfy an unpassionate reader, such an one as dares trust himself with the use of his own eyes and reason. As for that sort of men which chuse to follow noise rather than light, we must be content to leave them to the blind conduct of those guides, who, having no better means to keep their followers to them, go hallooing in the dark, and fill their ears with the insignificant sounds of infallibity, indefectibility, self-evidence, *and* demonstration.

Concerning the Appendix, *wherein you are particularly challenged, I hope for an account very shortly, and so take leave.*

SIR,

Your affectionate friend,

Lincolns'-Inn, Feb. 20. 1665. JOHN TILLOTSON.

The end of the Third Volume.